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ABSTRACT

The Magazine and Visual Communication Divisions section of the Proceedings contains the following 8 papers: "Beefcake, Breadwinner, or Babysitter: A Content Analysis of Male Images in Female-Targeted Magazine Advertising, 1978-1998" (Mikalee Dahle and Jennifer Greer); "The Impact of Larry Flynt: An Overview of One Publisher's Legal Battles" (Amy M. Drittler); "Black in a Blonde World: Race and Girls' Interpretations of the Feminine Ideal in Teen Magazines" (Lisa Duke); "Charles Moore's 'Life' Magazine Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, 1958-1965" (John Kaplan); "Out of Their Hands: Framing and its Impact on Newsmagazine Coverage of Indians and Indian Activism, 1968-79" (Jennifer Bowie); "Cuddly Bear and Vicious Ape: Soviets and Germans in Editorial Cartoons, 1933-1946" (Samuel P. Winch); "Visual Rhetoric: A Semiotic Evaluation of the Misrepresentation of a Subculture within the Myth of Lesbian Chic in Mainstream Advertising" (Susan Zavoina, Tom Reichert, and Kevin Maly); and "Readers' Perception of Digital Alteration and Truth-Value in Documentary Photographs" (Edgar Shaohua Huang). (RS)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

# Beefcake, Breadwinner, or Babysitter: A Content Analysis of Male Images in Female-Targeted Magazine Advertising, 1978 - 1998

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# Abstract

## Beefcake, Breadwinner, or Babysitter: A Content Analysis of Male Images in Female-Targeted Magazine Advertising, 1978 - 1998

A content analysis of ads featuring men was undertaken for women's magazines published in 1978, 1988, and 1998. Ads in 1978 publications tended to feature men in a clear role and related to the product; those in 1988 presented men in no clear role and unrelated to the product (a purely decorative role); and images in 1998 served as the middle ground between the two extremes. Clear trends also emerged across different magazine titles.

His name is Lucky, and he is known to the world as the Diet Coke guy. He is a man to be admired by many: physically fit, attractive, employed … and mercilessly ogled by every woman in what seems to be an all-female office. If only more men were *that* lucky.

Lucky the Diet Coke guy may be only one image provided by one advertising campaign from the early 1990s, but a new impression of male images in advertising seems to be evolving. In this case, a strong male component exists—not in a stereotypically powerful role, but instead a stereotypically sexist role. Other roles for men in advertisements have recently surfaced as well. Many advertisements show a family situation in which the father only knows what to do based on printed instructions left by the mother, or chores are completed by the father—but they are done all wrong and must be fixed by the mother. The existence of sex stereotypes in advertising has stirred controversy for decades, but the focus of that controversy has usually been on the depiction of females. Now, a role-reversal has taken place. Whether it is the beefcake or the bimbo, images of men in advertising are seemingly becoming more and more unflattering (Ingrassia, 1994; Lippert, 1997; Foote, 1988).

Despite the changing roles of men in society and the changing portrayals that seem to be reflected in the media, the bulk of the research focusing on role portrayals in advertising deals primarily and almost exclusively with images of females. A large body of literature exists addressing the professional and non-professional roles fulfilled by females, body orientation, physical attributes, positioning in relation to males, and levels of sexism (Ford & LaTour, 1993; Jaffe, 1991; Lanis & Covell, 1995; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988). Many researchers suggest that the preponderance of studies that have been conducted on this topic stem from the women's movement and an attempt to redefine the limited set of roles portrayed by females in the media (Skelly &

Lundstrom, 1981; Fejes, 1994; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). In response to the overwhelming number of studies conducted on female role portrayals, Andrew Wernick (1987) suggests:

> To round out the picture it is also important to consider how modern advertising depicts and addresses men. For men themselves, indeed, this question has become quite timely. For the sexual shake-up of the sixties and seventies has not only put in question prevailing notions of masculinity; it has also changed the relation of men to advertising itself (p. 278).

But an examination of the literature regarding male roles in print advertising in this country reveals only four content analyses that focus on male images—and three of these studies are more than a decade old (Skelly & Lundstrom, 1981; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986; Wolheter & Lammers, 1980; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). This acknowledgment of changing roles—and the subsequent dearth of information about it—has led to the undertaking of the current study. This study will fill a void in the analysis of male depictions in magazine advertising, extending this research to include female-audience magazines in recent decades. This analysis investigates the images of males in four female-targeted publications (*Vogue, Ladies' Home Journal, Better Homes and Gardens, Seventeen)*, assessing differences in these images over a 20-year time span (1978 to 1998). According to Fejes:

> The paucity of empirical media research on masculinity at this point represents a challenge and an opportunity to media researchers to contributed not only to a growing new area of research, but also to the examination and redefinition of one of the fundamental ways we define and act out our reality (1992, p. 22)

## Literature review

The "Diet Coke Break" campaign was seen as just one example of new methods advertisers were using to appeal to females (Ingrassia, 1994). Other industry observers noted the rising numbers of ads featuring men as sexual stimuli (Lippert, 1997) and to other insulting depictions of men in ads (Goldberg, 1989; Foote, 1988). However, empirical research is not as abundant as these anecdotal evaluations provided by general and trade publications. The handful of studies on male images in advertising will be reviewed briefly, starting with the broadcast medium.

### Broadcast advertising

Historically, research on the role of the male in advertising has primarily been addressed in its relation to the female image. A content analysis that compared male and female images in television advertising in the 1970s found that men were portrayed as more autonomous than women, were more often shown in occupational roles or advertising big ticket products, and were more often shown in a business setting (Fejes, 1992). However, another content analysis of 1986 network television ads indicated some change in the 1980s. Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingsley (1988) found that although the stereotypically traditional male role of businessman was still heavily represented, the relatively new portrayal of man as father and husband was increasing significantly.

Bretl and Cantor (1988) found similar results when they examined 397 television advertisements from 1985. They found that men were more likely than in previous studies to be seen in domestic settings with no other apparent occupation. According to the researchers, "advertisements seem to be presenting a less sexist and more equal view of the roles of men and women in society" (p. 607). Although the role portrayals of males in broadcast advertising seemed to be changing in the 1980s, the picture is less clear for the 1990s, when no formal analysis has emerged. Early in the decade, Kanner (1990) suggested that men were being depicted in "contradictory ways in the nineties:"

> Still, men aren't willing to sacrifice their authoritarian style to become domesticated wimps. 'Macho' may be gone (or, more likely, repressed), but 'masculine' remains synonymous with *strong*, and men by and large still want products that are 'tough,' even to the point of pain—after-shave stings *because* men like that" (p. 20).

Print Advertising

Content analysis of roles portrayed by males in print advertising also are few and far between—especially in the latter half of the 1980s and into the 1990s. Wolheter and Lammers (1980) examined print advertising from three years—1958, 1968, and 1978—in eight general interest publications: *Life, Look, Newsweek, The New Yorker, Reader's Digest, Saturday Review, Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report*. In examining occupational roles depicted by men, they discovered that men moved from filling primarily traditionally stereotyped roles of businessman and military man into the more non-traditional roles of sports figure and entertainer by 1978. Men also were found to serve a more decorative role (with no functional role related to the product) and fill a greater number of non-working roles in the 1970s than in previous decades. The researchers noted another intriguing trend: Though women were filling more and more non-traditional roles (working outside of the household), men were *not* found to appear more in a family role.

Skelly and Lundstrom (1981) conducted a content analysis of male images depicted in male-targeted magazines (*Esquire, Field & Stream, Sports Illustrated*), female-targeted publications (*Cosmopolitan, House Beautiful, Redbook*), and general-interest magazines (*The New Yorker, Reader's Digest, Time*) during 1959, 1969, and 1979. This study included a five-point scale measuring level of sexism, which noted whether men were used in purely decorative roles (Level 1 — the highest level of sexism) or portrayed so that evaluations of the male sex role based on capability (Level 5 — the lowest level of sexism). Of the 660 ads in nine magazines examined, no advertisements were coded at Level 5. Instead, researchers noted a doubling of decorative roles portrayed by males in advertising in all types of publications and a decrease in representations of working roles over time. With only 2% of the ads portraying men in either Levels 3 or 4, the researchers concluded: "Advertising featuring men appears to be gradually moving toward a decrease in sex-role stereotyping, although the progress is obviously slow" (Skelly & Lundstrom, 1981, p. 56). In examining the differences in portrayal for magazine type, the researchers found that publications with a male target depicted men in "manly" activities (Level 2) more often than in women's or general interest magazines.

Lysonski (1983) sampled general interest, male-targeted and female-targeted publications during 1974 and 1979 to determined the occurrence of family-oriented, non-traditional (non-sex stereotyped, like doing laundry or washing dishes) and career-oriented roles. He found that the depiction of males in non-traditional roles was the only increase that revealed statistical significance, jumping from 0.5% of the images coded in 1974 to 2.5% of the images in 1979. The occurrences of family-oriented and career-oriented roles also increased over time, but these tests did not yield statistical significance. Further, in examining differences between magazine types, Lysonski found that publications that were targeted to a male audience revealed significant increases in the depiction of males in all three investigated roles.

Research from other countries parallels findings about advertising evaluations in the United States. Zhou and Chen (1997), investigating Canada's 10 largest magazines in 1990, found that under the category of sex appeal, males were more than twice as likely than females to be portrayed in a purely decorative role, serving an attention-getting function only.

Two recent studies conducted by Kolbe and Albanese (1996, 1997) provide the only evidence of continuing research on male role portrayals in magazine advertising. The first study investigated sole-male images in male-audience magazines. Advertisements from six 1993 male-audience magazines (*GQ, Business Week, Esquire, Playboy, Rolling Stone*, and *Sports Illustrated*) were coded for physical characteristics such as facial hair and body type as well as adornments, dress, and camera angle. Among the findings: The camera angles used in the majority of the advertisements in the sample did not convey the traditional impressions of competency and physical domination. However, the researchers determined that the males in the sample were sometimes "objectified" and the images often implied a sense of "aloofness and detachment conveyed by the turned heads and averted eyes of many of the male models" (p. 17). The study also found that advertisers tailored ad images to coincide with editorial focus and target of the publication.

The second study undertaken by Kolbe and Albanese (1997) investigated some of the more popular units of analysis researched in the earlier studies, this time focusing on the roles of males in advertising in 1993. Using the same publications as in the previous study, the investigators looked specifically for occupational role portrayals, decorative versus functional role portrayals, and the incorporation of the male image into the execution of the advertisement. The authors examined the construct of "decorative presentation function," making a distinction between "decorative related to the product" and "decorative unrelated to the product." The latter category provides "images [that are] considered exploitative because the model is objectified and dehumanized" (p. 829). The researchers found that decorative role portrayals where the male served simply as a sexual stimulus were most common in *Business Week* and *Rolling Stone*. The study also documented a paucity of occupational role portrayals throughout all sampled publications, although there were significant differences across titles. The magazine containing the most occupations depicted within advertisements was *Business Week*, of which 47.5% fell into the "Executive, administrative, managerial" category. Further findings suggested a high percentage of depictions of males as athletes and cowboys, both stereotypic role portrayals.

Research Questions

While the studies conducted by Kolbe and Albanese (1996, 1997) extended the earlier research on males in print advertising into the 1990s, they did not investigate changing depictions of males over time. This study aims to fill that gap by posing the following research questions:

1. **What do the images of males in female-audience magazine advertising look like over the 20-year time span investigated? What types of models are used? Does the occurrence of sole-male or mixed-gender advertising vary over time or by magazine title? Does the percentage of advertisements containing a male component increase or decrease over time or magazine title?**

2. **Are male images in advertisements from female-audience magazines depicted in such a way as to suggest a specific role portrayal? Does the role representation of males in these magazines vary over time or by magazine title?**

3. **What are the decorative presentation functions served by males in advertisements from female-audience magazines? Specifically, do males serve a merely decorative role, providing ornamental support to the product, or are they decorative and depicted as having a direct relationship with the product? Do presentation functions vary over time or by magazine type?**

## Method

The sample advertisements for this study were drawn from four female-targeted consumer publications (*Ladies' Home Journal, Vogue, Seventeen,* and *Better Homes and Gardens).* These monthly magazines were selected because they have a large and predominantly female readership. *Better Homes and Gardens* averages 7.6 million readers; *Ladies' Home Journal, 5 million; Vogue,* 1.14 million; *Seventeen*, 1.9 million; and *Life,* 1.5 million (*Writer's Market, 1998).* The four titles also were selected to achieve diversity of content and reader demographics. *Better Homes and Gardens,* which provides home service information, has an average reader age of 42; *Ladies' Home Journal* is for "active empowered women" and targets women between 30 and 45; *Seventeen* covers fashion and a variety of topics for women in their teens and early 20s; *Vogue* reaches a median reader age of 32 and focuses on the changing roles of women by covering evolution in fashion, as well as the arts, health care, and world affairs (Holm, 1998, p. 476).

Magazines published in 1978, 1988, and 1998 were studied. Researchers have suggested that to accurately reflect any given year in content analysis research, about a quarter of the population to be studied must be coded (Riffe, Lacy, & Drager, 1996; Lacy, Riffe, & Randle, 1998). Therefore, three months were selected using a stratified sampling technique. One issue was chosen from the first, second and last third of the year. This technique yielded April, August, and October, and these months were used for each publication in each of the years (1978, 1988, and 1998) investigated in this study for a total of 36 magazines analyzed.

Following the method of previous studies, only full-page ads were included in the sample, and a male or identifiable male body part (legs or hands) must have appeared in the ad. Advertisements that exhibited both males and females also were included in the study. Also consistent with past content analyses, if an advertisement was found to appear more than one time within the same magazine, it was included in the analysis only once. However, if a duplicate advertisement was found under another magazine title, each advertisement was coded and included in the study. One researcher was primarily responsible for coding, but two other coders each examined 50 ads (about 10% of the sample). Intercoder reliability scores ranged from 89% to 100% with and average of 93%.

Variables

The independent variables examined in this study included magazine type, operationalized by the four magazine titles described above, and time, conceptualized by one year in each decade under study (1978, 1988, 1998). The time frame was considered of interest because of the paucity of comparative content analyses between these decades in recent years and because of the changes of male roles in society over that time period. Surveys suggest that men have moved away from the stereotypical roles of primary breadwinners toward a more egalitarian role, sharing household and child rearing duties (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Gerstl, 1961; Moore, 1997).

Dependent measures coded were occupational role portrayal and presentation function (decorative related to the product versus decorative unrelated to the product). The coding schemes are largely replications or extensions of those used in earlier content analyses of gender images. The scheme for occupational role portrayal was suggested by Zhou and Chen (1997), who investigated the depiction of domestic and non-domestic roles illustrated in advertisements. The authors noted:

> Domestic occupations include cooking, house cleaning, taking care of children at home, etc. Non-domestic occupations include high level (top manager, professional, entertainer, etc.), middle level (middle level white collar occupation, etc.) and low level (service, clerical, construction worker, student, etc)" (Zhou & Chen, 1997, p. 489).

To determine occupational, the coder looked to see if it was mentioned in the advertisement, if a task was performed, if a tool was used, if the occupation provided the surrounding or background image for the model in the depiction, or if the model was in relation to others involving these criteria in the advertisement. The occupational role portrayals evaluated in this study included "domestic role," "non-domestic occupation," "non-domestic and non-occupational," and "cannot tell."

The coding scheme for presentation function was borrowed from research conducted by Kolbe and Albanese (1997), who created the categories of "decorative related to the product" and "decorative unrelated to the product." An example of the first category would include a muscular man posing in a fitness advertisement, whereas a depiction would fall into the second category if, for example, a muscular man was presented in a travel destination advertisement.

## Findings

### Demographics

Of the 36 publications in the sample, the total number of full-page advertisements within the publications ranged from 26 to 217. In total, 517 ads were included in the sample—202 from 1978 (39.1%), 159 from 1988 (30.8%), and 156 from 1998 (30.2%). Of these, 130 contained a sole-male component (25.1%), compared to 387 mixed-gender advertisements (74.9% of the sample). The mean number of males within the ads was 1.79. *Vogue* had the largest number of full-page ads featuring men at 147. *Seventeen* had 142 ads; *Better Homes and Gardens* had 136 ads; and *Ladies' Home Journal* had 92 ads.

> ***Research Question 1: The Advertising Picture.*** **What do the images of males in female-audience magazine advertising look like over the 20-year time span investigated? Specifically, what types of models are used? Does the occurrence of sole-male or mixed-gender advertising vary over time or by magazine title? Does the percentage of advertisements containing a male component increase or decrease over time or magazine title?**

For the purposes of this study, the male models in the advertisements investigated were coded as either "human" or "fictional." Of the 517 ads studied, an overwhelming 490 ads (94.8% of the sample) contained human males, with only 27 (5.2%) containing a depiction of males as fictional. Despite the low occurrence of fictional males, a crosstabulation comparing year of publication with type of male model was conducted, resulting in significant differences. Table 1-1 illustrates these findings.

**Table 1-1: Crosstabulation of Year of Publication with Model Type**

| Year of Publication | Human Model **expected: 94.8 %** | Fictional Model **expected: 5.2 %** |
|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 92.1 % | 7.9 % |
| 1988 | 95 % | 5 % |
| 1998 | 98.1 % | 1.9 % |

$\chi^2 = 6.42$, df = 2, $p < .041$

As this table illustrates, the overall trend in the publications under investigation is toward *not* using fictional characters in advertisements. The Chi square analysis revealed statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 6.42$, df = 2, $p < .041$), with 1978 representing a small but discernable over-reliance (based on expected values for the column) on fictional character advertising and a subsequent under-reliance (again based on expected values) on human characters. The expected and actual values for human and fictional characters in 1988 were about equal. And in 1998, the evident trend was toward more human male models and fewer fictional male models. No significant differences were found when examining type of model used by magazine title.

In examining the use of sole-male and mixed-gender images, the 517 ads were broken down into sole-male ads (130, or 25.1% or the sample) and mixed-gender ads (387, or 74.9% of the sample). A Chi square analysis of the crosstabulation of this variable by year of publication revealed no statistically significant differences over time. However, differences were seen when comparing magazine titles. A Chi square analysis revealed statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 26.90$, df = 3, $p < .001$), with one interesting twist: As table 1-2 shows, the values for *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Vogue* almost exactly equaled the expected values, while the actual values for *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Seventeen* revealed a variance of at least 13% between expected and actual

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values. The advertisements investigated within *Better Homes and Gardens* emphasized a depiction of sole-male advertisements with a lesser use of mixed-gender ads, whereas *Seventeen* clearly underrepresented depictions of sole-males advertisements and overrepresented mixed-gender ads, again based on expected values for the columns.

**Table 1-2: Crosstabulation of Magazine Title and Sole-Male / Mixed-Gender**

| Publication Title | Sole-Male **expected: 25.1%** | Mixed-Gender **expected: 74.9%** |
|---|---|---|
| *Ladies' Home Journal* | 25 % | **75%** |
| *Better Homes* | 39 % | **61 %** |
| *Vogue* | 25.2 % | **74.8 %** |
| *Seventeen* | 12 % | **88 %** |

**$\chi^2 = 26.90$, df = 3, p < .001**

To address the final element of Research Question 1, the percent of ads with men in each publication was calculated. Within the 36 female-targeted publications investigated in this study, the average percentage of all advertisements containing a male presence was 15.8%, illustrating that about one in six advertisements contained a male image. Table 1-3 represents the mean percentages of all ads containing a male within publications studied over the 20 years.

**Table 1-3: Average Percent of Ads Featuring Males by Magazine Title and Year**

| Publication | 1978 | 1988 | 1998 | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ladies' Home Journal* | 21.1% | 12.1% | 10.8% | **14.7%** |
| *Better Homes* | 18.2% | 16.8% | 17.2% | **17.4%** |
| *Vogue* | 14.3% | 9.6% | 13.9% | **12.6%** |
| *Seventeen* | 20.7% | 21.0% | 14.2% | **18.6%** |
| **Total** | **18.6%** | **14.9%** | **14.8%** | **15.8%** |

An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for magazine title (F = 2.95, df = 3, p < .05). Post-hoc analyses found that *Seventeen* and *Better Homes and Gardens* had a significantly larger portion of ads containing male images than the other titles. No significant difference was discovered

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in comparing the presence of males in ads across the years studied, although the trend appeared to be toward using fewer male-image ads. No significant interactions were discovered when examining publication type or time together.

> *Research Question 2: Occupational Role:* **Are male images in advertisements from female-audience magazines depicted in such a way as to suggest a specific role portrayal? Does the role representation of males in these magazines vary over time or by magazine title?**

Four occupational roles were defined and coded for: "domestic," "non-domestic occupation," "non-domestic and non-occupational," and "cannot tell." Of the 517 ads, 251 (48.5% of the sample) depicted a male in a non-domestic and non-occupational environment; 127 ads (24.6%) were coded into the "cannot tell" category, usually because of a lack of background to the illustration; 108 ads (20.9%) depicted a male in a non-domestic occupation; and 31 ads (6%) depicted a male in a domestic role. To examine whether this occupational representation of males varied over time, a crosstabulation was run comparing year of publication with role portrayal of the male in the advertisement. Table 2-1 represents the breakdown of this crosstabulation.

**Table 2-1: Crosstabulation of Publication Year and Role Portrayal**

| Year | Domestic Role **expected: 6%** | Non-domestic Occupation **expected: 20.9%** | Non-domestic, Non-occupational **expected: 48.6%** | Cannot Tell **expected: 24.6%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 7.9 % | 25.7 % | 43.1 % | 23.3 % |
| 1988 | 1.9 % | 15.7 % | 51.6 % | 30.8 % |
| 1998 | 7.7 % | 19.9 % | 52.6 % | 19.9 % |

$\chi^2 = 17.00$, df = 6, $p < .01$

A Chi square test revealed significant differences between year of publication and role portrayal ($\chi^2 = 17.00$, df = 6, $p < .01$). Compared to the values expected based on the numbers in the overall sample, both domestic roles and non-domestic occupations were over-represented in

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1978, whereas the rather ambiguous "non-domestic and non-occupational" classification occurred slightly less than expected. In 1988, however, a large shift in portrayals occurred, with both domestic roles and non-domestic occupations vastly under-represented. The seemingly role-less classifications of "non-domestic/non-occupational" and "cannot tell" occurred less than expected in this year. However, 1998 saw domestic roles and non-domestic/non-occupational roles emphasized slightly more than would be expected, non-domestic occupations almost equal to expected values, and the "cannot tell" category occurring less than expected.

To provide further analysis of the role portrayal of males in magazine advertising over the three decades, the columns of "domestic role" and "non-domestic occupation" were collapsed to comprise an "any role clearly identified" heading. This heading was then compared with the data from "non-domestic and non-occupational" and "cannot tell," both categories that illustrated males in unclear role categories. Table 2-2 represents the results from this crosstabulation.

**Table 2-2: Crosstabulation of Year and Role Portrayal (collapsed)**

| Year of Publication | Any Role Clearly Identified **expected: 26.9%** | No Clear Role Identified **expected: 73.1%** |
|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 33.7 % | **66.3 %** |
| 1988 | 17.6 % | **82.4 %** |
| 1998 | 27.6 % | **72.4 %** |

**$\chi^2 = 11.72$, df = 2, p < .01**

This data, too, revealed significant differences from expected values after conducting a Chi square analysis ($\chi^2 = 11.72$, df = 2, $p < .01$). The year 1978 provided an over-representative depiction of males in a role, be it domestic or occupational. The year 1988 illustrated males by and large without a specific role, as the "any role clearly identified" category was underrepresented and the "no clear role" category occurred more often than expected. In 1998, males were both depicted

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within a role and outside of a role, very close to the expected values.

The final element of Research Question 2 asked whether the role portrayal of males varied by magazine. Table 2-3 represents the data of interest comparing role portrayal and magazine name.

**Table 2-3: Crosstabulation of Magazine Title and Role Portrayal**

| Publication Title | Domestic Role **expected: 6%** | Non-domestic occupation **expected: 20.9%** | Non-domestic, non-occupational **expected: 48.6%** | Cannot Tell **expected: 24.6%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ladies' Home Journal* | 9.8 % | **18.5 %** | 42.4 % | **29.3 %** |
| *Better Homes* | 14.7 % | **24.3 %** | 47.8 % | **13.2 %** |
| *Vogue* | 1.4 % | **19 %** | 49.7 % | **30 %** |
| *Seventeen* | 0 % | **21.1 %** | 52.1 % | **26.8 %** |

**$\chi^2 = 45.54$, df = 9, p < .01**

The role portrayal of males in female-targeted publications was seen to vary significantly by magazine name ($\chi^2 = 45.54$, df = 9, p < .01). Compared with their expected values, *Ladies' Home Journal* represented many more men in domestic roles and fewer in "non-domestic/non-occupational"; *Better Homes and Gardens* over-represented men in domestic roles and non-domestic occupations; *Vogue* had significantly fewer men in domestic roles; and *Seventeen* vastly underrepresented men in domestic roles (*no* men were coded in a domestic role in this publication).

A crosstabulation also was conducted comparing magazine with the presence of a clear role or no clear role in an advertisement. Table 2-4 illustrates the findings.

**Table 2-4: Crosstabulation of Magazine Title and Role Portrayal (collapsed)**

| Publication Title | Any Role Identified **expected: 26.8%** | No Role Identified **expected: 73.2%** |
|---|---|---|
| *Ladies' Home Journal* | 28.3% | **71.7%** |
| *Better Homes* | 39% | **61%** |
| *Vogue* | 20.4% | **79.6%** |
| *Seventeen* | 21.1% | **78.9%** |

**$\chi^2 = 15.73$, df = 3, p < .01**

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From this data, significant statistical differences were found among role portrayals based on publication ($\chi^2 = 15.73$, df = 3, $p < .01$). Specifically, *Ladies' Home Journal* exhibited little difference between actual and expected values; *Better Homes and Gardens* portrayed men in a role—either domestic or occupational—more often than expected; and *Vogue* and *Seventeen* depicted men in more ambiguous roles, less often filling a domestic or occupational role.

> ***Research Question 3: Decorative Function.*** **What are the decorative presentation functions served by males in advertisements from female-audience magazines? Specifically, do males serve a merely decorative role, providing ornamental support to the product, or are they decorative and depicted as having a direct relationship with the product? Do presentation functions vary over time or by magazine type?**

The 517 advertisements coded in this study revealed an exact split in decorative presentation functions—259 (50.1%) portrayed a male as decorative and related to the product, while 258 (49.9%) depicted a male as decorative and unrelated to the product.

A crosstabulation was run investigating the decorative presentation function of males in the advertisements across the dimension of year. Table 3-1 illustrates these results.

**Table 3-1: Crosstabulation of Year and Decorative Presentation Function**

| Year of Publication | Decorative Related to Product **expected: 50.1%** | Decorative Unrelated to Product **expected: 49.9%** |
|---|---|---|
| 1978 | 56.9% | **43.1%** |
| 1988 | 38.4% | **61.6%** |
| 1998 | 53.2% | **46.8%** |

$\chi^2 = 13.13$, **df = 2, p < .001**

This Chi square analysis revealed statistically significant differences across year of publication ($\chi^2 = 13.13$, df = 2, $p < .001$). In 1978, many more men were pictured in a decorative relationship in which the model was somehow related to the product, whereas decorative unrelated to the product depictions were underrepresented. For 1988, the exact opposite was discovered:

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Males were depicted as decorative and related to the product less frequently and decorative and unrelated to the product more frequently. An analysis of 1998 revealed expected values and actual values that were more equal in representation than previous years, but the trends indicated that more men were depicted as decorative and related to the product than expected and fewer were depicted as decorative and unrelated to the product.

The final element of Research Question 3 addressed the relationship between decorative presentation functions and magazine title. The results are illustrated in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2: Magazine Title and Decorative Presentation Function**

| Publication Title | Decorative Related to Product **expected: 50.1%** | Decorative Unrelated to Product **expected: 49.9%** |
|---|---|---|
| *Ladies' Home Journal* | 56.5% | **43.5%** |
| *Better Homes* | 71.3% | **28.7%** |
| *Vogue* | 42.2% | **57.8%** |
| *Seventeen* | 33.8% | **66.2%** |

**$\chi^2 = 44.80$, df = 3, $p < .001$**

Through a Chi Square analysis, statistically significant differences were reported of decorative presentation function across magazine titles ($\chi^2 = 44.80$, df = 3, $p < .001$). No anomalies were discovered in the presentation functions of males in *Ladies' Home Journal*. *Better Homes and Gardens*, however, depicted a disproportionate number of males in decorative and related to the product characterizations, and the magazine vastly under-represented males in decorative and unrelated to the product portrayals. The exact opposite was the case for both *Vogue* and *Seventeen*: Portrayals of males as decorative and related to the product were underrepresented, and portrayals of males as decorative and unrelated to the product were over-represented.

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## Discussion

The general advertising picture suggested by this study indicates that mixed-gender advertising is more popular in female-targeted publications than sole-male advertising. An overwhelming 75% of the advertising investigated found depictions of a male with at least one female. Thus, it seems that advertisers are not willing to spend as much money on sole-male advertising representations as they are on mixed gender advertising when they place ads in female-targeted publications.

When addressing the question of occupational representation, the picture seems to suggest that males in female-targeted publications are by-and-large not represented in a clearly identified role. A large majority of the advertisements studied—73%—depicted men in no clear role, while only 21% depicted men in an occupation and a mere 6% depicted men in a domestic role.

### The time variable

Examining characteristics by the years of publication revealed statistically significant differences. The greatest disparity between years seemed to occur between 1978 and 1988, with 1998 almost serving as a middle point in the swinging pendulum of representations. Advertising from 1978 over-represented men in a clear role (domestic or occupational), whereas advertising from 1988 over-represented men in the "no clear role identified" category. Advertising from 1978 also portrayed more men in decorative depictions with some relationship to the advertised item and fewer decorative-unrelated depictions, whereas—again—the exact opposite was discovered for 1988: fewer men in "decorative and related to the product" portrayals and more in decorative-unrelated situations. These results could be a direct outgrowth of the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Because the movement may have awakened women to their potential roles in society in the earlier parts of the decade of the 1970s, the portrayals through 1978 advertising of more men in family roles and in fewer decorative-unrelated depictions could have been a result of this increasing awareness. Perhaps the advertisers, in communicating to women through these publications, were attempting to keep up with the shifting paradigms in society, and were therefore more likely to over-represent men in these socially advanced roles. It is possible that the advertising representations of the 1970s could have had an effect on the number of women moving into the workforce and subsequently on the number of men moving into the home to take on domestic roles.

However, this same movement may have awakened women in the later part of the 1970s and early 1980s to the representation of women in advertising portrayals: The overwhelming amount of research on women in decorative (and some would contend, sexist) roles took place during this time frame, possibly resulting in a backlash effect that was discovered through an analysis of the advertising in 1988. Perhaps advertisers now were attempting to relate to the female target by essentially "putting down" the male element, placing them in similar roles to which women had been relegated for so long.

If the swinging pendulum image is accepted as an accurate representation of these decades, then it is clear to see that the decade of the 1990s may be a middle point between these two extremes. Because the onslaught of the women's movement is 30 years in the past, it is possible that the initial push toward equality and the subsequent backlash toward the depiction of males has given way to a more equal, less extreme approach to the portrayal of the male gender. Advertisers may be recognizing shifts from elements in society that are attempting to view both males and females on equal planes, becoming more aware that the extremely *un-stereotyped* approach in the 1970s and the diametrically opposed and largely *stereotyped* approach in the 1980s both depicted men in inaccurate representations reflected in society.

The magazine title variable

Significant differences also were found by magazine title, and patterns often emerged. To understand these patterns, it is important to keep in mind the demographic targets of the publications investigated in this study. Both *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal* target women in their late 30s and 40s; *Vogue's* target is women in their early 30s; and *Seventeen* targets women in their teens and early 20s. Often, the advertising in *Vogue* and *Seventeen* revealed a consistent depiction of males. The two publications consistently depicted men as decorative and unrelated to the product, under-representing the decorative and related to the product category. The unrelated decorative image, according to Kolbe and Albanese (1997), is "the male equivalent of the bikini-clad woman in tool ads. These decorative images are considered exploitative because the model is objectified and dehumanized" (p. 829). In contrast, *Better Homes and Gardens* over-represented males in decorative-related to the product images. No differences from the expected values were found for *Ladies' Home Journal*. Thus, clear differences exist between the two fashion-oriented publications and the two publications with an older demographic target.

Further similarities between *Vogue* and *Seventeen* were found in assessing the roles portrayed by males in advertising. Whereas *Ladies' Home Journal* over-represented men in domestic roles and *Better Homes and Gardens* over-represented men in both domestic roles and occupations, *Seventeen* and *Vogue* consistently underrepresented men in these roles. In fact, no males were found in domestic roles in any of the nine issues of *Seventeen* examined. Through further analysis of the role construct, *Seventeen* and *Vogue* again consistently portrayed men without a clear role (often with no background to the illustration), whereas *Better Homes and Gardens* over-represented the existence of a male in a clear role.

Both *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Vogue* were found to consistently include advertising that featured males over the years studied, whereas *Ladies Home Journal* and *Seventeen's* percentages decreased over the 20-year time frame. *Better Homes and Gardens* also was found to over-represent sole-male images, whereas *Seventeen* over-represented mixed-gender advertisements. Overall, it seems that the two publications targeting older females (*Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal*) depicted men in more egalitarian roles than the younger-audience magazines.

The results of this content analysis suggest that the demographic targets of these publications may have a great deal to do with the advertising depictions presented within the pages. With a considerably older target audience, and less of a concern with fashion and beauty, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal* produced relatively consistent results. With its emphasis on homeowners—and therefore a desired appeal to the male and the female reader—*Better Homes and Gardens* provided perhaps the least pejorative depiction of males within its pages. An analysis of this publication revealed more males presented in decorative-related depictions, more males in a clearly defined role, more sole-male images, and more men pictured in advertising for non-domestic products. These findings are consistent with the demographic targets of its audience, with an emphasis on female issues without offending the potential male market. Therefore, *Better Homes and Gardens* was decidedly more "male" in orientation than the other publications, leading to results that paint a more flattering and diverse picture of the male than those found in the other publications.

Though *Ladies' Home Journal* also is directed at the older female demographic segment, its content is inherently less "male-oriented" than *Better Homes and Gardens*, explaining its reliance on depicting men in more domestic product advertising. This publication also was found to vary significantly from *Better Homes and Gardens* through an analysis of the use of males in advertising over the 20 years investigated: *Ladies' Home Journal* has relied less on male images in advertising as the years have progressed than has *Better Homes and Gardens*. In the 1998 edition of *Writer's Market*, the entry describing *Ladies' Home Journal's* editorial content explained that the publication was for "active, empowered women" (Holm, p. 790). This description may explain the decreased use of men in advertising over the years, as the editorial content is focusing on a strictly female content—as opposed to *Better Homes and Garden's* attempt to attract both male and female homeowners. Many of the other elements of interest in this investigation found the advertising in *Ladies' Home Journal* not producing statistically significant differences from the other publications' advertising.

*Vogue* and *Seventeen*, however, through their younger targets and fashion orientation, depicted men in considerably less flattering and more stereotypical ways. In fact, much of the advertising observed in these magazines depicted a man in a strictly admiring stance, serving as an observer or someone engaged in a romantic act with the female. These advertising depictions may serve to devalue the status of women in society, suggesting that they are only "worthy" when being admired by a man. Further support for this stereotyped depiction of males in *Seventeen* and *Vogue* can be found in the results that suggested men are more often depicted in decorative and unrelated to the product images in these publications. These publications consistently depicted men with little relationship to the product and merely serving as an attention-getting and often sexually stimulating device to lure female consumers.

The advertising devices discovered in these two publications can be seen to have possibly detrimental effects on the female targets of the magazines. Because men are often seen in merely decorative roles, the female readers may unconsciously be perceiving the stereotyped functions of males—as romantic partners, as decorative devices, as individuals without clear roles identified—and may be creating expectations based on these perceptions. These claims are consistent with the assertions made by researchers investigating female role portrayals in magazines. Researchers often emphasized that the roles filled by females in advertising needed to be revised before women were allowed equal status to men in society. Again, it seems that these publications are outwardly backlashing against the male element of society, portraying them in similar images as popular advertising has portrayed women for years: Men are seen as having little value outside of being a romantic partner, a decorative object, or someone instrumental in admiring the females in the ad. The danger is more evident for readers of *Seventeen*, whose youth and inexperience may be contributing to an outright belief in the roles presented within the advertising of this publication.

## Limitations

The intention of this study was to highlight trends throughout popular women's magazines, attempting to determine if the portrayals of males within these publications has changed as have the roles filled by males in society. The answer, it seems, is yes—in some ways—and no, in some ways. Though this research doesn't prove that advertisers are responding to social pressures, it does suggest that the depictions of males in print advertising in female-targeted publications have changed over the 20-year time frame investigated.

However, this analysis is bound by the publications chosen for this study. Because not all female-targeted publications were studied, the assertion cannot be made that these trends are consistent across women's magazines. Perhaps studying a broader sample of female-targeted publications could have revealed more evidence of a trend toward these changing depictions—or more evidence of a lack of trends in the depiction of males in women's magazines.

Further limitations evident in this study include the concept of coding elements. The choice to borrow coding schemes for this investigation from previous research resulted in using single items to measure each variable. Because, for example, Kolbe and Albanese only investigated the decorative construct by addressing whether the image was related or unrelated to the product advertised, this was determined to answer the question of decorative depiction for this investigation. However, a more sensitive scheme that used multi-item measures to define the same variable might have revealed different trends in the publications under investigation.

## Future Research

Other methods of investigation—an experimental design or survey research—could shed light on the perceptions gained from advertising portrayals. These methods, in contrast to content analysis, are more likely to yield causal links between advertising and impressions in society. Conducting an experiment investigating both males' and females' perceptions gained from viewing stereotyped male advertising could extend this research into further areas of interest. It also may be of interest to survey advertising executives, asking them about their intention in the depiction of the genders and the trends they see in the industry. Asking these same questions of the advertising representatives of the publications that print the advertisements may also be in order.

A further call for research based on this study would be for more content analyses of the print medium. Though past research has been conducted on male-targeted publications, this research has not been adequately brought into the current decade. A broader investigation comparing trends in female-targeted, male-targeted, and general-interest publications could reveal tendencies in advertising over the last few years. Comparing the advertising in print publications with that in other types of print—like newspapers—may also reveal significant trends, suggesting whether these depictions are limited to periodicals. It also would be of interest to apply some of the techniques used in this and in previous studies to broadcast advertising. Through the literature review on male portrayals in broadcast advertising, *no studies* were discovered that expressly centered on investigating male roles. In an age where television advertisements portray men in seemingly more and more unflattering ways, research conducted on the broadcast advertising industry could reveal important trends in the portrayal of males.

## Conclusion

This study does suggest the possibility of advertising trends in the depiction of males in the print medium. Content analysis research, however, cannot attempt to determine what is causing these trends and how consumers are reacting to them. Advertising over the time frame investigated has portrayed men as beefcakes, breadwinners, and babysitters—among other things. The effects on society are unknown, but Goffman would suggest that these impressions are internalized and lead to the development of a set of beliefs about the male gender. Over the past 20 years, the portrayal of males in advertising in the publications investigated has seemed to go from one extreme in 1978 to the other in 1988, with the depictions in 1998 serving as somewhat of a middle point. Whether the pendulum is still swinging—and if it is, which direction it will go—remains a mystery.

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Mag.

# THE IMPACT OF LARRY FLYNT:
# AN OVERVIEW OF ONE PUBLISHER'S LEGAL BATTLES

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## INTRODUCTION

In March of 1972, Larry Flynt was a little-known nightclub owner whose establishments featured female entertainers. Flynt, who was born into poverty in rural Kentucky, believed his customers would enjoy monthly updates about the girls, and created a four-page *Hustler Newsletter* to fill the need. Over the following two years, the newsletter was transformed into the now infamous *Hustler* magazine.[1] The man who entered the business world at age 22 with one bar in Dayton, Ohio, had given birth to what would become a publishing empire.[2]

The center of Flynt's world is *Hustler*. Although his corporation owns roughly 30 titles and his distributing company handles many more[3], *Hustler* is a title synonymous with Flynt himself. The magazine is a vehicle for his unique taste in pornography. *Hustler* has depicted everyone from Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis to the Statue of Liberty in compromising positions.

*Hustler* is also a means for Flynt to express his political views. Columns such as "Asshole of the Month" allow Flynt a chance to comment on those figures most infuriating to him at the moment.[4] This personal influence upon the content of *Hustler* has been recognized by the courts. For example, mention was made in *Spence v. Flynt* that, ". . .Larry Flynt is not free to arise each morning and select a public figure to attack and defame for no reason."

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[1] Larry Flynt, with Kenneth Ross, *An Unseemly Man*, (Los Angeles: Dove Books, 1996) , 82-88.
[2] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 50.
[3] Michael Kaplan, "The Resurrection of Larry Flynt," *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management* Vol. 22 No 11 (June 15, 1993) : 36; Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 25.

*Hustler* is generally regarded as tasteless, outrageous, and disgusting.[5] Therefore, it is no surprise that the 25-year history of the magazine is filled with legal battles concerning its content. From an analysis of these cases, one sees the great and varied impact *Hustler* has had upon media law. The purpose of this study is to examine a series of representative cases concerning the magazine. This allows analysis not only of legal battles brought about by the magazine industry but also the extent to which one man and one publication have affected the whole of media law.

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[4] *Spence vs. Flynt,* 816 P.2d 771, 785 (Supreme Court of Wyoming, 1991).

[5] For discussions of the nature of *Hustler*'s content, see *Dworkin v. Hustler,* 867 F.2d 1188 (9th Cir. 1989), *Leidholdt v. Hustler,* 860 F.2d 890 (9th Cir. 1988), *Hustler v. Falwell,* 485 U.S. 46 (1988), all discussed later. Also, *Ashby v. Hustler,* 802 F.2d 856 (6th Cir. 1986). Ursula Ashby brought a libel and invasion of privacy claim against the magazine after private nude photos of Ashby were stolen and printed without her permission in *Hustler*. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals describes Flynt as "the publisher of a magazine that is generally acknowledged to be tasteless and offensive"(863). Also, *Douglass v. Hustler,* 769 F.2d 1128 (7th Cir. 1985). In similar fashion to *Ashby,* Douglass brought an invasion of privacy claim against the magazine after a photographer gave nude photos (which Douglass had released to *Playboy*) of the actress to *Hustler*. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals lists the types of items found within the first 51 pages of *Hustler:* "New Discovery: How to Give Women Vaginal Orgasms;" "World News Roundup," which consists of purely sexual news; and an advertisement claiming "Get Any Girl *Within 5 Minutes* or YOU PAY NOTHING!"(1145)

**FLYNT AND *HUSTLER*: A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP**

A discussion of *Hustler*'s impact upon media law cannot exclude the impact of Flynt himself. As will be seen, many of *Hustler*'s legal battles have arisen from the magazine's political content, not its pictorial pornographic material. While *Hustler* has been challenged by local obscenity laws, most of the cases involving the magazine are broader and more national in scope.

If any man's life is reflected in his work, Flynt's is mirrored by the pages of *Hustler*. The outrageousness of Flynt's own personal pursuits comes alive in the vividly candid features of *Hustler*. Flynt, who says he does not believe men were meant to be monogamous,[6] has had four wives, innumerable affairs, and one sexual encounter with a chicken.[7] Likewise, *Hustler* has stretched the limits of mainstream pornography since its inception in the 1970s.

Flynt, who believes people purchase his magazine with one intention in mind[8], infuses sex into every feature, column, and cartoon. Whereas pornographic magazines such as *Playboy* run respected articles on topics of the day, Flynt sees no point in sugarcoating his publication to make it more acceptable. And as much as Flynt aims to please his primarily blue-collar audience, he sees no conflict of interest in offending them as well. Flynt is an "equal-opportunity" offender,[9] seeking to provide an outlet for the dark humor that resonates with his most loyal readers.

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[6] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 71.
[7] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 12.

*Hustler* is Flynt's campaign standard. Every person or cause Flynt loathes becomes fodder for parody among *Hustler*'s pages. Given the controversial nature of his industry, Flynt finds many people to be against him. He has increasingly relished the public spotlight, compounding this effect. He ran for president in 1984 while serving a six-month contempt sentence in a California jail.[10] He also has a reputation for verbally crucifying the judges in his courtroom battles. For example, during a Supreme Court hearing of Kathy Keeton's appeal of her lawsuit against *Hustler*, Flynt became agitated and shouted at the justices that they were "eight assholes and a token c***."[11]

Most recently, Flynt has used his wealth in an attempt to expose the hypocrisy he believed existed among those pursuing the impeachment of President Clinton. In a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* in October of 1998, Flynt offered $1 million to anyone with concrete evidence of adulterous activity on the part

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[8] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 91.

[9] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 91.

[10] Aaron Lee, "21st Century Flynt: Larry Flynt on *Hustler*, Hollywood and How to Save the Country," www.flyntontrial.com, circa 1996. Flynt served time in federal prison after being held in contempt of court by Judge Manuel Real. Flynt was involved in a series of unruly court appearances regarding his possession of a surveillance tape depicting auto maker John DeLorean's participation in a drug deal. Flynt refused to release the tape or name his source, offending a series of judges in the process. After shouting obscenities at Judge Real to the point Real had him gagged, Real sentenced Flynt to six months in a federal psychiatric prison. While in prison, Flynt decided to run for President as a Republican.

of any government official.[12] Flynt's efforts have uncovered enough information to force a number of Washington officials, most notably Republican Representatives Bob Barr of Georgia and Robert Livingston of Louisiana, to publicly disclose extramarital affairs.[13] Flynt compiled the results of his own morality investigations in *The Flynt Report*, an 82-page magazine that hit newsstands in late spring of 1999.[14] Through his publishing company--especially *Hustler*--Flynt has a media outlet dedicated to his viewpoints. And Flynt has never shied away from freely expressing himself both within the magazine and through the public discourse.

Given *Hustler*'s pornographic nature, one might imagine the magazine has had a long history of obscenity battles. Surprisingly, this is not the case. Although *Hustler* was challenged on obscenity charges based on its pictorial content in Ohio and Georgia during the 1970s,[15] the magazine has increasingly been taken to court over its political and social

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[11] Flynt, *An Unseemly Man*, 192.

[12] Margaret Carlson, "Indecent Proposal," *Time* Vol. 152 No. 16 (19 October 1998) : page number unavailable.

[13] "20 Most Fascinating Men in Politics," *George* (April 1999) : 89.

[14] For a look at Flynt's results, see *The Flynt Report* Vol. 4 No. 1 (1999).

[15] Flynt (along with his wife, brother, and the magazine itself) was prosecuted in Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Ohio, on charges of pandering obscenity and organized crime. Flynt was convicted, but the charges were later overturned upon appeal. *State v. Hustler*, 1979 Ohio App. LEXIS 10141 (Ohio App. 1979). Flynt was also prosecuted in Lawrenceville (Gwinnett County), Georgia for distributing obscene material. Flynt was eventually convicted and given a suspended sentence. During the trial, Flynt was shot

parodies.[16] (However, as will be seen from the court cases discussed, the non-pictorial content of *Hustler* is often crude and indecent, if not obscene as well.)

The purpose of this study is to examine the landmark cases involving *Hustler*. Such an examination yields an interesting perspective on the goals of Flynt and his most profitable magazine. It also offers those with special interest in the magazine industry practical knowledge of the First Amendment precedents set by one of the most memorable publications in the field.

**THE PROCEDURE**

The sheer number of court cases concerning *Hustler* makes any in-depth analysis of them as a whole too large for this study. Rather, a sample of cases, chosen from those appealed to the Supreme Court and representing the main torts filed against the publication over the years, will be discussed. These cases provide a useful overview of the legal challenges to the magazine. From these precedents, it is discernible that *Hustler*'s legal fights have both done a great deal to protect the freedom of the press at large as well as make the press more vulnerable to attack in certain areas.

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and paralyzed by a sniper. *State v. Flynt*. (Further citations unavailable.)

[16] See *Leidholdt v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 890 (9th Cir. 1988); *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46 (1988); *Ault v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 877 (9th Cir. 1988); and *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

## *HUSTLER V. FALWELL:* THE PORNOGRAPHER'S GREATEST VICTORY

In 1988, the Supreme Court handed down a momentous decision in both the history of media law and the history of Larry Flynt himself.[17] In the most liberal decision involving *Hustler*, the Court ruled that public figures seeking to prove intentional infliction of emotional distress by a publication must prove the actual malice standard established in *New York Times v. Sullivan.*[18]

In the November 1983 issue of *Hustler*, the magazine featured a parody of a then-popular ad campaign by Campari Liqueur. In the ads, celebrities discussed their "first time," meaning their first experience with the liqueur. However, the ads clearly played on the sexual double entendre of the phrase "first time." *Hustler's* ad parody featured the Rev. Jerry Falwell -- a nationally known minister, head of the conservative Moral Majority, and object of personal revulsion on the part of Larry Flynt. In the ad, which was labeled "ad parody -- not to be taken seriously," Falwell discussed preaching while drunk and claimed his "first time" occurred with his mother in an outhouse.[19]

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[17] Falwell's privacy and emotional distress tort against *Hustler* has been the subject of books including Rodney A. Smolla, *Jerry Falwell v. Larry Flynt: The First Amendment on Trial*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); a key component of Flynt's *An Unseemly Man*, 209-256; and the basis for the movie *The People Vs. Larry Flynt*, (Columbia 1996).

[18] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 47-48 (1988). In *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254 (1964), the Court ruled that public figures differed from private figures for the purposes of libel law, saying public figures must prove a publication acted with "reckless disregard," (i.e. actual malice) for the truth in order to substantiate the claim that a libel has occurred.

Falwell was outraged and sued the magazine for invasion of privacy, libel, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.[20] The District Court granted a directed verdict against *Hustler* on the privacy claim, and a jury found for Falwell on the libel and emotional distress claims, granting him a $200,000 judgment. The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed the judgment, but the ruling was overturned by the Supreme Court in an 8-0 vote.[21]

In reversing the lower court's judgment, the High Court said emotional distress claims must be held to the actual malice standard to "protect the free flow of ideas and opinions on matters of public interest and concern."[22] The Court further said the First Amendment interest in safeguarding speech prevents a finding of emotional distress brought on by speech that any reasonable person would understand to be a statement of opinion.[23] The Court's ruling recognized the importance of all thoughts, even the most rhetorical, within the marketplace of ideas:

> The sort of robust political debate encouraged by the First Amendment is bound to produce speech that is critical of those who hold public office or those public figures who are intimately involved in the resolution of important public questions or, by reason

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[19] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 48 (1988).

[20] *Falwell v. Hustler*, Civil Action No. 83-0155-L-R, (1983).

[21] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 46-47 (1988).

[22] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 46 (1988).

[23] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 46 (1988).

> of their fame, shape events in areas of concern to society at large.[24]

The Falwell decision offered many protections for the media. First and foremost, the necessity of public figures' proving actual malice when pursuing emotional distress claims leaves the media less susceptible to lawsuits. While the precedents in libel cases have run the liberal-to-conservative gamut with respect to the actual malice standard,[25] the actual malice standard has nonetheless been necessary for public figures to prove libel since the 1964 ruling in *New York Times v. Sullivan*.[26]

Falwell's claim, if ultimately successful, would have provided other public figures with a precedent for filing suit against those media outlets disseminating perceived defamatory statements, even if libel (by use of the actual malice standard) could not have been proved. Without the ruling in *Falwell*, the standard for proof of emotional distress would have been less strict. The High Court's ruling gave the press added insurance against such lawsuits, which are costly, time-consuming, and which often are used as a deterrent against expressing viewpoints that look unfavorably upon certain public figures.

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[24] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 51 (1988); *Seton Hall Law Review*, v. 20 (1989) "Constitutional law -- first amendment -- public figures and public officials must establish statement was published with actual malice to recover for intentional affliction of emotional distress. *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell*, 108 S. Ct. 876," 282.

[25] In *Rosenbloom v. Metromedia*, 403 U.S. 29 (1971), the Supreme Court ruled the distinction between public and private figures used since *New York Times* v. *Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254 (1964) made no sense, saying future cases should instead examine whether or not the plaintiff was involved in a matter of public interest. If any citizen could be proven to be involved in such a matter, then the actual malice standard would apply. This liberal ruling seemed to shield media organizations from virtually all potential libel lawsuits. However, in *Gertz v. Welch*, 418 U.S. 323 (1974), the high Court reinstated the public/private distinction, finding that prominent citizens who become involved in public matters through no personal aspiration were not public figures for the purpose of proving libel. These individuals therefore were not held to the actual malice standard. The decision reversed *Rosenbloom*, and set a more conservative standard for libel torts.

[26] *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, (1964).

The *Falwell* decision serves as a protective precedent for political cartoonists as well. The Court found *Hustler*'s ad parody to be a caricature, and therefore a cousin to the long-standing tradition of political cartoonists.[27] The Court recognized the political cartoon as a means of attack within the public discourse and found political cartoons to play a pivotal role in social debate. The Court found no standard to separate the vehicle of the political cartoon from the vehicle of *Hustler's* ad parody, instead finding both to be protected as free speech.[28] Such a precedent gives strong protection to political cartoonists, who parody, caricature, and criticize public officials for a living.

These types of content are regularly used in magazines. News-conscious publications such as *Newsweek* and *Time* continually feature political cartoons and caricatures. Political magazines such as *George* use not only cartoons but also socially concerned content that could easily offend. The wide spectrum of fashion and entertainment magazines constantly discusses public figures and their careers, clothing and relationships. The *Falwell* ruling protects all publications from frivolous emotional distress lawsuits on the part of public figures.

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[27] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 53-54 (1988).

[28] *Hustler v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 55 (1988); *Seton Hall Law Review*, v. 20 (1989) "Constitutional law -- first amendment -- public figures and public officials must establish statement was published with actual malice to recover for intentional

### *AULT* AND *LEIDHOLDT*: FLYNT'S "ASSHOLES"

Flynt's penchant for framing his opinions in the crudest manner possible led to a series of 1980s lawsuits against the magazine by anti-pornography activists. In two of these rulings, a Federal Court of Appeals in California handed *Hustler* another liberal precedent protecting both the publication and the media as a whole.

Peggy Ault was an ardent anti-pornography activist in Oregon. The founder of Citizens in Action for Clackamas County (Oregon), Ault protested X-rated video stores, picketing stores and advocating legislation of anti-pornography laws. In April 1985, *Hustler* chose Ault as its "Asshole of the Month."

This regular column clearly serves as a forum for Flynt to berate a person with whom he is dissatisfied. The column has often targeted those individuals who most strongly oppose Flynt's industry and endeavors. As such, "Asshole of the Month" has produced a number of lawsuits over the years.[29]

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affliction of emotional distress. *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell*, 108 S. Ct. 876," 283.

[29] Lawsuits based purely on remarks from the "Asshole of the Month" column include: *Leidholdt v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 890 (9th Cir. 1988); *Ault v. Hustler et al*, 860 F.2d 877 (9th Cir. 1988); and *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

The column featured a small picture of Ault superimposed over the buttocks of a naked, bent-over man. (This is apparently *Hustler*'s preferred method of physically illustrating those discussed in the column.) The article enumerated Ault's anti-pornography activities, and labeled her as a "tight-assed housewife," who was "frustrated," "threatened by sex," and "in need of professional help."[30] Ault sued *Hustler* for invasion of privacy, libel, trespass, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Similarly, Dorchen Leidholdt was a founding member of the activist group Women Against Pornography, and had argued against pornography in debates held in the national media. In the June 1985 issue of *Hustler*, Leidholdt was named "Asshole of the Month," and pictured in the same fashion as Ault. The column called Leidholdt a "pus bloated walking sphincter," and labeled her and her compatriots as "sexually repressed."[31] Leidholdt sued for libel, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and invasion of privacy.

The two cases were argued the same day before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals after both Ault's and Leidholdt's cases had been dismissed by the district court. In rulings handed down on two consecutive days, the court affirmed the dismissals, finding in favor of *Hustler*.[32]

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[30] *Ault v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 877, 879 (9th Cir. 1988).
[31] *Leidholdt v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 890, 892 (9th Cir. 1988).

In both decisions, the court found that the columns in question were constitutionally protected expressions of opinion. Such a finding nullified the libel, privacy, and emotional distress claims of each:

> . . . [I]f a challenged statement is one of opinion rather than fact, then under the First Amendment it cannot give rise to a defamation claim. . . . [O]pinions are constitutionally privileged because, in the Supreme Court's oft-reiterated view, under the First Amendment there is no such thing as a false idea.[33]

As in the *Falwell* decision, the court upheld the integrity of the marketplace of ideas theory, finding that all ideas, no matter how rhetorical, must be allowed the freedom to compete in the public discourse.

Despite the vehemence of insults within the columns on Ault and Leidholdt, the court held that each epithet had to be considered within the context of the article as a whole. The court found the column was routinely used as a means of lampooning opponents and critics of *Hustler*, and that the audience for which the column was intended, being sympathetic to the cause of pornography, would understand the insults were personal opinions.[34] The court additionally found it incredulous to believe that a reasonable reader would take a charge such as "pus bloated walking sphincter" to be an actual statement of fact.[35]

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[32] *Ault* v. *Hustler*, 860 F.2d 877, 879 (9th Cir. 1988); *Leidholdt* v. *Hustler*, 860 F.2d 890, 892 (9th Cir. 1988). Ault and Leidholdt appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, which denied the petition for writ of certiorari on 20 March 1989. *Ault v. Hustler*, 489 U.S. 1080; *Leidholdt v. Hustler*, 489 U.S. 1080.

[33] *Ault v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 877, 880 (9th Cir. 1988).

[34] *Ault v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 877, 881 (9th Cir. 1988).

The *Ault* and *Leidholdt* decisions offer liberal protection to those in the media who find themselves reporting on or expressing opinions. While the duty of the editorial columnist to provide an opinionated examination of contemporary events remains fairly uncontested by public officials, the *Ault* and *Leidholdt* decisions extend such courtesy to all media practitioners. Any media outlet may potentially be involved in the expression of a personal opinion, whether its own or the repetition of another's.

The court's rulings in these two cases provide another great triumph in *Hustler*'s body of precedents. The courts have found that even statements as vulgar and extreme as those in *Hustler* meet the requirements for constitutionally protected opinion. As such, Flynt may use his magazine to espouse and promote his own ideals, and media outlets may express opinions without fearing libel.

*Hustler* is certainly not the only magazine to regularly include opinion. Besides the standard marked editorial, many magazines include regular columnists, guest columnists, caricature illustrations, and the like. The protection of opinion is not needed only for newspaper editorials, but for all media.

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[35] *Leidholdt v. Hustler*, 860 F.2d 890, 894 (9th Cir. 1988).

## *SPENCE:* AN EXCEPTION TO THE "PUBLIC FIGURES" RULE

While litigation involving *Hustler* has produced liberal, media-friendly rulings such as the ones just discussed, *Hustler* has had its share of defeats as well. One such case involves attorney Gerry Spence, whose libel lawsuit against the magazine caused the Wyoming Supreme Court to carve out a great exception to the public figures/actual malice rule.[36]

Andrea Dworkin, a feminist author and anti-pornography activist, filed suit against *Hustler* for libel and invasion of privacy, among other claims, after three 1984 issues included derogatory comments about her.[37] In her suit against the magazine, Dworkin was represented by Gerry Spence, a prominent attorney.[38]

In July of 1985, *Hustler* retaliated by choosing Spence as its "Asshole of the Month." The column criticized all lawyers as "parasitic scum-suckers," and personally attacked Spence for public image as an attorney working for the benefit of the 'little guy.' The article claimed Spence was actually motivated by money and berated him for representing a "censor like Dworkin."[39]

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[36] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991); Stacey L. Hayden, "Limited-Purpose Public Figures: *Spence v. Flynt* as an Illustration of the Need for a More Complete Test," *Brigham Young University Law Review* v. 1992 n. 3 (1992) : 827. Flynt appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, but the petition for writ of certiorari was denied on 20 April 1992. *Flynt v. Spence*, 503 U.S. 984.

[37] *Dworkin v. Hustler*, 867 F.2d 1188, (9th Cir. 1989). While none of the features involved Dworkin's picture or likeness, they included references such as labeling a woman depicted in "the throes of ecstasy" as "the mother of radical feminist Andrea Dworkin."

Spence filed suit seeking damages for defamation. A district court granted *Hustler*'s motion for summary judgment, but the Wyoming Supreme Court reversed this ruling, holding that Spence deserved to have his day in court.[40]

The state's high court recognized that the district court had relied heavily on *Hustler* v. *Falwell* for its decision. Finding Spence to be a public figure, the district court ruled Spence had not proven the actual malice standard, and was therefore entitled to no damages from *Hustler*. The state court held that Spence did not meet the necessary characterization of "public figure," but was rather a private person working on behalf of another individual, possibly without personal involvement. Furthermore, the court held that for a person to be considered a public figure for the purposes of libel, that person must have been involved in the "public controversy" in question *before* the libel occurred. Since Spence was acting on Dworkin's behalf, and had not been involved in the pornography debate before taking her case, the court found that Spence was not a public figure for the purpose of the suit and did not need to

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[38] Hayden, "Limited-Purpose Public Figures," footnote 55.

[39] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 773 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

[40] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 779 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

meet the actual malice standard to prove libel and recover damages.[41]

Even if a person did qualify as a public figure for the purposes of libel, the court provided public figures a means for challenging the actual malice standard:

> A public figure is not subject to defamatory attack and criticism just because he is a public figure. In other words, Larry Flynt is not free to arise each morning and select a public figure to attack and defame for no reason at all. The public figure subject to defamatory criticism is one who is involved in the resolution of important public questions or who by reason of fame shaped events in areas of concern to society.[42]

In essence, the court's reasoning allows any public person, no matter what his or her level of involvement in the public discourse, to claim libel. The plaintiff would simply have to demonstrate he or she plays no role in resolving public issues, no matter what the actual level of participation in these issues.

The court's ruling ignored the context of the Spence case. Flynt, in his mind, had reason to criticize Spence -- Spence was representing the plaintiff in a lawsuit that, if successful, could cost *Hustler* a multimillion dollar judgment. Spence, as a prominent attorney representing one side in a public debate on pornography, was certainly involved in the discussion and possible resolution of a societal concern.

Instead, the court based its judgment on a fundamental disagreement with the ruling in *Hustler v. Falwell*. Although the court recognized and accepted the actual malice standard as outlined in the Supreme Court ruling, it found sufficient grounds to find *Spence* an exception to the rule: "The *Falwell* case states the law, and we accept it as such. But the *Spence* case is different. . . .as applied to *Spence*, there ought to be, and there is, a limit."[43]

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[42] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 774 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

The court, in discussing the history of defamation law, also sent a clear message as to its opinion of the content of *Hustler*: ". . .the development of the law of defamation has moved along a strange path to a place where we now say that the more outrageous, vile, vulgar, humiliating and ridiculous the publication, the more it is protected."[44]

In both the court's discussion of the *Falwell* ruling and its discussion of "vulgar" publications within the context of defamation law, it is clear the court found *Hustler* to be below a standard worthy of First Amendment protection. The court found a means, through its creation of an exception to the public figures rule, for allowing Spence's lawsuit and other future defamation lawsuits by those prominently involved in public debate. Furthermore, the decision makes the media vulnerable to libel and emotional distress charges and paves the way for potentially devastating settlements against media outlets.

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[42] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 776 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

[43] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 774 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

[44] *Spence v. Flynt*, 816 P.2d 771, 774 (Wyoming Supreme Court, 1991).

The *Spence* decision is especially dangerous for extremist publications such as pornography or political magazines. The *Spence* decision sets an exception to the *Falwell* rule, an exception that could prove costly to publications that choose to criticize--through opinionated means--even the smallest players in a controversy.

## *KEETON: HUSTLER'*S GREATEST DEFEAT

Undoubtedly, the most long-standing negative ruling to come out of *Hustler*'s legal troubles involves the libel suit filed by Kathy Keeton. Keeton's search to find a jurisdiction for her lawsuit ended at the Supreme Court, which ruled that a plaintiff is justified in using individual state laws to his or her advantage when filing grievances.[45]

Keeton was involved in the production of *Playboy* magazine, a pornographic publication and rival to *Hustler*. Additionally, it was widely know that Keeton was the long-time mistress of Bob Guccione, the publisher of *Playboy*.[46] Keeton filed a libel suit against *Hustler* after she claimed she had been defamed in five separate issues of the magazine. Keeton, a New York resident, filed suit in Ohio, where *Hustler* magazine was headquartered at the time. However, by the date of the filing, Keeton had missed the statute of limitations deadline for such suits. In fact,

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[45] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, (1984).

[46] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, 772 (1984). Keeton and Guccione's relationship provided *Hustler* with material for an article written by Flynt himself, detailing Guccione's appetite

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similar deadlines had passed in all 50 states save New Hampshire, which had an unusually long (six-year) window in which to file.[47]

Keeton filed her lawsuit in New Hampshire, but the lawsuit was dismissed by the district court, which found the tort in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's due process requirements. The Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court's decision, but the Supreme Court overturned the ruling.[48]

The Court found that *Hustler*'s circulation within New Hampshire, while minimal (10,000-15,000 copies monthly), was sufficient to justify the state's jurisdiction over the libel action. The court held that the magazine had chosen to enter the New Hampshire market freely, making it accountable to the state's laws.[49] Just as *Hustler* would seek to use these state laws to its advantage if necessary, the Court said, so was it justifiable for Keeton to file suit in a state with laws sympathetic to her case.[50]

The *Keeton* ruling sets a precedent for those eager to file libel suits against publishers. By ruling that a plaintiff may shop for the state with the most favorable environment in which to file suit, the High Court left the media more vulnerable to attack by those whom they offend. The ruling is especially disturbing in light of the long-standing "single publication rule," which holds that a plaintiff in a libel suit may recover

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for women. *Guccione v. Hustler et al*, 800 F.2d 298, 299 (2nd Cir. 1986).

[47] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, 772-773 (1984).

[48] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, 781 (1984).

[49] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, 779 (1984).

nationwide damages within one jurisdiction. This, coupled with the *Keeton* precedent, provides incentive for those seeking libel claims to search out the friendliest jurisdiction in which to file suit, in order to better ensure a victory.[51]

Libel suits are costly to all parties involved, regardless of location. But forcing a media outlet to fight a libel claim in a remote jurisdiction simply because that jurisdiction has sympathetic laws makes any legal action even costlier for the medium involved. This inevitable burden upon the media organization in question is likely to be additional incentive to a plaintiff who is considering pursuing a libel claim. The *Keeton* decision remains Flynt's greatest legal defeat, for it stands to have the most powerful long-term effect upon media law as a whole.

## *HUSTLER* AND OBSCENITY: THE TRIAL IN CINCINNATI

Given *Hustler*'s long and colorful history of litigation, it is no surprise the publication recently faced another legal battle. In a life that has come full-circle, Flynt and his publication prepared to go on trial in spring of 1999 in Cincinnati on charges of pandering obscenity and corrupt

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[50] *Keeton v. Hustler*, 465 U.S. 770, 779 (1984).

[51] *New York Law School Review*, v. 31 (1986) "Asserting long-arm in personam jurisdiction over multi-state libel defendants -- *Keeton v. Hustler Magazine, Inc.* [104 S. Ct. 1473]." 311-312.

activity.[52] This time, however, Flynt originally both welcomed and even orchestrated his most recent day in court.

Returning to his roots, Flynt took what has now become a personal First Amendment crusade to Hamilton County, Ohio. There he handed out free copies of *Hustler* in 1997 with the hopes of being arrested. (*Hustler* has not been sold in Cincinnati since Flynt was first prosecuted there 20 years ago.)[53] Instead, local officials kept their distance, so Flynt opened an X-rated bookstore in a town free-speech activists have dubbed "Censornati."[54]

Still, the police left Flynt alone. When Flynt began selling hard core pornography, he finally got the attention of local officials, who redrew the zoning lines to make Flynt's store illegal. Before Flynt could be cited for the zoning violation, however, the local prosecutor sent a 14-year-old boy undercover into Flynt's store to buy porn videos. After the boy was successful in his purchases, the prosecutor filed charges.[55]

After the charges were filed, Flynt made attempts to have the case thrown out of court on the grounds that Ohio's obscenity

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[52] Associated Press, "New Charge is Hustled Up in Ohio for Larry Flynt," *The National Law Journal* (20 April 1998) as found on web.lexis-nexis.com/universe.

[53] Kristen Delguzzi, "Flynt Fans Snap Up 'Hustler'," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (15 May 1997).

[54] Joel Stein, "Larry Flynt, The Sequel," *Time* Vol. 151. No.15 (20 April 1998) : 17.

[55] Stein, "Larry Flynt, The Sequel," 17.

But as part of the plea agreement, Flynt was given permission to continue distribution and sales of *Hustler* in Cincinnati, which Flynt claims was his sole concern from the start. Flynt believed the deal was necessary to protect *Hustler* in Hamilton County, and called the plea bargain "like french-kissing your sister."[61]

## THE LEGACY OF FLYNT AND HIS EMPIRE

As discussed earlier, the story of *Hustler* is the story of Larry Flynt himself. The magazine is his brainchild, his passion, and his mouthpiece. Through *Hustler*, Flynt feels the freedom to criticize, defame and startle, all in the name of free enterprise and free speech. For this reason, the original purpose of the magazine itself has changed. No longer does Flynt intend for the magazine to shock on a pornographic level. Now, Flynt sees the magazine as a means to shock the public into realizing just how little free speech (he believes) is protected.

Flynt increasingly sees himself as a free speech advocate. But he has not always been a First Amendment crusader. In fact, Flynt saw little moral purpose in the magazine when it began: "I don't know if I had ever read the First Amendment when I started *Hustler*. The only thing I wanted to do was make money and have fun."[62]

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[61] "Plea Deal Reached in Larry Flynt Obscenity Trial," (courtesy of Court TV) www.flyntontrial.com.

[62] Lee, "21st Century Flynt," www.flyntontrial.com.

law is unconstitutional.[56] These efforts were unsuccessful, and Flynt's case went to trial in late April.[57]

Jury selection was difficult, as the jurors would be required to watch at least 30 hours of pornography videos.[58] In a move that shocked courtroom observers, Flynt and his co-defendant, his brother and business partner Jimmy Flynt, accepted a plea bargain agreement. They pled guilty to two counts of pandering obscenity, and the remaining 13 counts of pandering obscenity, disseminating material harmful to a minor, and engaging in a corrupt act were dropped. The brothers received a $10,000 fine and were ordered to take all the pornographic videos off the shelf. If convicted, the two could have received 26 years in prison and a $65,000 fine.[59]

Many were shocked by Flynt's plea bargain. Flynt had originally been quite vocal in his desire to take this cause to the Supreme Court if necessary. He had intended for this case to prove once and for all that pornography was protected by the First Amendment.[60]

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[56] Dan Horn, "Flynts Lose First Round," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (2 December 1998).

[57] Kimball Perry, "Obscenity Trial Delayed so Flynt Can Have Surgery," *The Cincinnati Post* (13 January 1999).

[58] Terry Kinney, "Jury Selection Under Way in Obscenity Trial of Larry Flynt," *The Cincinnati Post* (10 May 1999).

[59] For more information, see staging.court.com, and arm of the Court TV website. The trial was to have been broadcast live on Court TV, as the network found it to be a case of national interest for two reasons: the First Amendment issues at stake, and the growing interest in Larry Flynt himself.

[60] "Plea Deal Reached in Larry Flynt Obscenity Trial," www.flyntontrial.com.

Flynt's purpose has since changed. Once concerned with simply making a profit, Flynt now envisions himself as a martyr for free speech. From his many court battles (often brought on by his own tantrums both in the pages of *Hustler* and in the courtrooms themselves), Flynt has developed a sense that he is a lonely freedom fighter, courageously defending something no one else will: pornography.

Flynt is driven by a loyalty to his readers. He feels pornography censors have taken advantage of his blue-collar audience. Yet Flynt also believes his audience often lacks the discretion necessary to realize this abuse:

> For 200 years, the Church has had its hand on our crotch. Government is exceedingly moving in that direction. I think Americans lose sight of individual rights and what our Constitution means: an unrestricted right of free choice. . . . The issue is not whether Larry Flynt has the right to sell his magazine; it's whether John Smith has the right to buy the magazine. As long as there's one person in the world who wants *Hustler*, he should be able to buy it. And (I) should be able to publish it.[63]

Flynt's outlook on life changed after he was convicted on obscenity charges in Cincinnati and sentenced to 25 years in prison (the conviction was later overturned): "I realized that freedom of expression is something you can't take for granted. That's when I started to look at social problems. I developed some pretty strong opinions, and I started fighting for what I believe in."[64] Flynt now believes he has "played a big part in advancing the cause of civil liberties" through his proud and often brazen defense of the porn industry. Flynt is not ashamed to be the publisher of *Hustler,* for he finds pornography to be a form of art.[65]

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[63] Lee, "21st Century Flynt," www.flyntontrial.com.

[64] Lee, "21st Century Flynt," www.flyntontrial.com.

Few publications have been as consistently controversial as *Hustler,* and few individuals have been as remarkably outspoken as Larry Flynt. The man who began his business to make money now considers himself a free speech crusader. Yet his corporation continues to turn a sizable profit every year. This Flynt paradox makes both the magazine and its publisher of great interest to magazine and media scholars. *Hustler*'s legal battles have both afforded the media greater protections and stripped the media of formerly held legal safeguards. And the magazine's mission has changed greatly while still relying on moneymaking pornographic tactics.

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[65] Lee, "21st Century Flynt," www.flyntontrial.com.

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# Black in a Blonde World: Race and Girls' Interpretations of the Feminine Ideal in Teen Magazines

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# Black in a Blonde World:
# Race and Girls' Interpretations of the Feminine Ideal in Teen Magazines

Idealization of the feminine form and codification of "the feminine arts," usually having to do with the care of family, are not new--nor are gendered standards of appearance and behavior unique to the female sex. However, what is new is the interest media scholars and critics have shown in identifying the ways in which the mass media might be implicated in producing negative psychic effects in women and girls. In particular, interest has centered on the way women and girls may compare themselves to atypically tall and thin models (Bruch, 1978; Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, & Thompson, 1980). Such a comparison has frequently been cited by media critics as contributing to increased eating disorders among American females: "...the omnipresent media consistently portrays desirable women as thin....Girls compare their own bodies to our cultural ideals and find them wanting" (Pipher, 1994, p. 184).

The research in this area has been limited, and the little published work on the effects of model comparison has produced conflicting results. What is known is that year after year, teen magazines are consistent in their portrayal of the feminine ideal (Evans, 1990), even across publications; subject matter consistently centers on appearance, and the audience for teen magazines grows every year.

This research is part of a longitudinal study initiated in 1994 (cite deleted here and in subsequent references to assure author's anonymity for the review process). In that work, ten White, middle-class, female participants, ages 12 and 13, were interviewed for their interpretations of *'Teen, Seventeen, YM,* and *Sassy* (which is no longer being published). These girls' readings centered on images of beauty: specifically, the "perfect" feminine body. Participants routinely ignored or rejected magazines' fashion formulations and advice on hair and makeup. However, girls seemed ill equipped to critically analyze magazines' images of the feminine physique, even when they recognized these images did not accurately reflect the girls they knew.

One of the most pressing questions left unanswered by that study is the impetus for this one: How might race influence girls' readings of teen magazines and the magazines' portrayals of the feminine ideal?

The most popular teen magazines are arguably culturally specific in their execution of major themes, but enjoy a substantial African American audience.

To address this question in this research, Black and White girls who read teen magazines were interviewed to determine how they used or ignored material in those texts in constructing notions of feminine beauty. In particular, this paper addresses how material on feminine self-presentation (makeup and fashion) and body image is interpreted by girls of different races. The literature on African American attitudes toward beauty, body image, and self-presentation suggested that Black girls would negotiate teen magazines very differently than White girls: for example, because of stronger cultural support for heavier women. Black girls might suffer far less negative impact on body image.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teen Magazines and Their Readers

Of the 14 million girls between the ages of 12 and 19 in the United States, it is estimated that over half read *Seventeen*, the best-selling teen magazine. Although the majority of readers of the three largest teen magazines, *Seventeen*, *'Teen*, and *YM*, are White, the magazines have a significant audience among girls of color: *Seventeen* reaches 44% of "ethnic females 12-19" (defined as African American, "other" race, or from a Spanish-speaking household); *'Teen* and *YM* each reach 34% of these same girls. African American girls ages 12-19 make up the single largest non-White group of readers -- they comprise, on average, about 12% of the readership for each of the three major teen titles. The 1997 MRI TwelvePlus notes that although only 12% of people over the age of 12 identify themselves as Black, 16% of *Seventeen*'s readers do -- meaning that magazine draws a greater percentage of African American readers than are represented in the population. The median age of readers of teen magazines is 15-16; the median household income is between $39,000 and $43,000 annually (Source for all: 1997 MRI Teenmark).

The content of *Seventeen*, *'Teen*, and *YM* is virtually indistinguishable from one magazine to the next (Evans, Rutberg, Sather, & Turner, 1991). Sixty percent of the magazines' copy was devoted to "beauty, fashion, cooking, and decorating" in each of the years 1961, 1972, and 1985 (Pierce, 1990, p. 491).

### Adolescents and Media Effects

Roberts (1993) maintains that is easy to ascribe "big effects" to the mass media because the public tends to notice change rather than consistency -- a few teens mimicking a mass-mediated trend seems more noteworthy that many teens ignoring it; the more important questions focus on "differences among audience members...are key to understanding how and why mass media affect people" (p. 174-5). How, for instance, do younger audience members seeking to construct self-identities interact with media differently than other audience members? Roberts calls teens with commonalties that inform their media interpretations "subgroups" of the overall audience (similar to Fish's, 1979, "interpretive communities"). One characteristic of a subgroup may be race. For instance, in an examination of how gender and race mitigated interpretations of Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach" music video, Brown and Schultz (1990) found White participants saw an anti-teen-pregnancy message while Black participants saw a story about the difficulties of male-female relationships (cited in Roberts, 1993, p. 176).

Comstock and Paik (1978) posited that media help teens formulate scripts for guiding their behavior in unfamiliar situations. This scripting function of teen magazines was evident in my first study, where early adolescent girls used teen magazines to provide them with insights on how to interact with boys in romantic situations they might encounter in the future. The degree to which teens are affected by media is largely determined by the relevance of the message (see also Cohen, 1991) and whether the behavior or belief advocated is useful and socially appropriate (i.e., in line with local norms and approved or discouraged by society at large).

The uses and gratification approach to media research is frequently suggested as the most appropriate for study of adolescents and the media. Arnett, Larson, and Offer (1995) have explicated five ways adolescents use the media: for entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification (p. 521). Although Arnett et al. are clear in outlining how the model is appropriate to study of Western children at different developmental stages of self-identity, he does not suggest how race -- as it mitigates socialization -- is addressed by his model.

## The Theories of Social Learning and Social Comparison

How and why might the media, and teen magazines in particular, be used by adolescent girls in projects of identity development? The theories of adolescent development of particular interest here are cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954).

Bandura argued that human socialization takes place primarily through modeling in the non-reinforced observation of others. In the real world, behaviors are modeled by significant others and then imitated if deemed appropriate. If such imitated behavior is subsequently rewarded, the individual is more likely to repeat the action than if it is punished. Researchers attempting to make the link between media exposure and negative effects on women and girls frequently use social learning theory to ground their work. For example, Harrison and Cantor (1997) have argued "the process of modeling, as explicated in social-learning theory...provides a theoretical means by which young women may acquire the ideal of a thin body, the motivation to engage in extreme dieting behavior, and instructions on how to do so from the mass media" (p. 44). Social learning theory suggests that as "thinness promoting" magazines such as the ones being studied begin to include more images of girls of color, the prevalence of disordered eating among them increase.

Festinger's social comparison theory (1954) focuses on the human drive to evaluate opinions and abilities by considering *similar* others. Subsequent researchers have extended the theory to show personal traits (e.g., attractiveness) and life circumstances may be evaluated by self-comparison to *dissimilar* others (Wood, 1989). Merton (1957) construed the theory to include comparison to others with whom subjects had no social interaction, but with whom they shared a common social status – for example, advertising models (Richins, 1991, p. 72). Researchers trying to identify the effects of models on adolescents' assessments of their physical attractiveness often use social comparison theory (Martin & Gentry, 1997; Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991; Stice & Shaw, 1994). Although some researchers have found evidence that such a comparison process does occur, with negative consequences to female self-perceptions or self-esteem (Cash, Cash, & Butters, 1983; Stice & Shaw, 1994), others have reported mixed results (Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991; Thornton & Moore, 1993).

## Gender and Adolescence as Mitigated by Race and Class

Adolescence has been located as a time of tremendous social upheaval for young adults. It is frequently noted that adolescent girls experience more stress, declining confidence, and self-image disturbance (Brown & Gilligan 1992; Harter 1993) than do boys. In a 1991 study sponsored by the American Association of University Women, only 29% of high school girls (race unspecified) said they were happy with themselves, compared to nearly half of boys.

Freedman (1984) has noted, "Boys 'show off' through status and power, thus signaling their potency; girls cultivate attractiveness, thus seeking admiration and indicating to boys their social interest"

(p. 31). Girls, who are more likely to judge themselves based on their physical attractiveness (Franzoi, 1995), suffer declining self-esteem and estimations of their attractiveness in adolescence (Harter, 1993). Girls learn that the right look and being "nice" are vital to acceptance by others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Teen magazines are thought to contribute to the socialization of girls into traditional, appearance-based standards of femininity (e.g., Peirce, 1993). Further, media critics argue that teen magazines may accentuate girls' plunge in self-confidence by inviting self-comparison to textual images of "feminine perfection." The implication has been that this pressure is keenly felt by all girls; however, the literature described in the next section suggests that African American girls may be less susceptible to teen magazines' version of femininity than are their White counterparts.

Adolescence, like gender, is a social construct, and the experience of this period of life is highly variable according to girls' different cultural backgrounds and stage of identity development (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). To understand how and why girls read, we must first understand the socially situated positions from which they read. Because of researchers' focus on White youth, the unique adolescent experience of African American girls has seldom been addressed (Smith, 1982). In fact, race has profound implications for studies of what it means to be an American female; it is one of the most important indicators of girls' self-image.

Prendergast, Zdep, and Sepulveda (1974) found that Black girls rated themselves consistently higher than White girls did on several dimensions of self-esteem (e.g., being good looking, being athletically adept). These results have been supported by later studies, which have found that African American girls rate their overall attractiveness much higher than White girls (Parker, Nichter, Nichter, & Vuckovic, 1995). In extensive interviews with African American girls, Leeds (1994) suggested that girls' and women's magazines might be less important to them in defining and reinforcing beauty standards than were "...the appearance of favorite video stars, what they had heard their older brothers say, the opinions of peers and lectures from their mothers" (p. 149).

Black women may hold ideas about the ideal body type quite different from those of their White counterparts, regardless of their economic backgrounds. For example, Parker, Nichter, Nichter, and Vuckovic (1995) found that Black girls and women are more satisfied with their bodies and suffer from far fewer eating disorders than White girls, despite the fact that Black girls begin to outweigh White girls in adolescence (Rucker & Cash, 1992). Black girls have indicated their belief in a heavier body shape as ideal (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1996; Rucker and Cash, 1992), and heavier women are viewed as powerful and healthy by African Americans (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1996; Millman, 1980). Additionally, Black girls indicated that their beauty is based in "attitude and style" whereas White girls in the same study believed their attractiveness was judged in large part by how thin they were. These findings are consistent in investigations of working- and middle-class Black youth. (Parker, Nichter Nichter, & Vuckovic, 1995).

Middle-class adolescence, typically described as occurring between the ages of 12 and the early twenties, ends much sooner for a large number of lower income Black females -- at about age 18 -- because economic factors necessitate greater family responsibility at a younger age. However, middle-class girls of both races are said to enjoy a similar, extended period of adolescence, relatively free of the family and economic responsibilities borne by girls in earlier times, or by contemporaries in less fortunate circumstances.

Class mitigates girls' experience of race in other important ways, as well. Kilson (1983) describes a Black middle class in a kind of racial purgatory, finding affinity with neither Whites nor Blacks. In replications of Clark and Clark's (1947) classic doll study, researchers found class had a potent effect on children's doll choices, with middle-class African American children more likely to choose a White doll than lower income Black children, who were far more likely to choose a brown doll. Likewise, White middle-class children were more likely to choose a brown doll than were White lower income children (Porter, 1971; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974).

## Other Magazine Studies

The original impetus for my research was supplied by one of the most active of the British cultural studies researchers, Angela McRobbie. She began her career with a textual analysis of what was then the best-selling British teen magazine for girls, *Jackie!* (1978a). McRobbie identified "codes of femininity" that she argued were incorporated into the text to "shape the consent of the readers to a set of particular values" (p. 2); among these were codes of romance, personal and domestic life, and fashion and beauty (p. 36). These codes were the essential elements of scripts the magazine provided for girls to use in the exercise of their everyday lives. All girls were presumed to have identical interests and equal need and desire for such scripts. The false norms created by such limited scripts were presumed to have a devastating effect on girls, encouraging competition for boys and isolation from other girls (p. 28).

In a content analysis of American teen magazines, Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner (1991) reached a similar conclusion: "Articles and advertisements mutually reinforced an underlying value that the road to happiness is attracting males for a successful heterosexual life by way of physical beautification" (p. 110). Finders (1996) argues that the scripts found in teen magazines will continue to effect girls until the texts' embedded messages are made visible and are no longer taken for granted.

Frazer (1987) rejects that the passive reader implied by McRobbie's analysis and instead argued that girls interacted with the text and with each other to create meanings. These meanings shifted and were modified according to the contexts in which the meanings were elicited. Currie (1996) argues that while "ideology does not rule out agency" (p. 474), "it *is* constitutive of everyday reality" (emphasis added). Her argument is similar to Condit's (1989) -- a text may be polysemic, capable of being interpreted numerous ways, but that does not neutralize its ideological potential. We are limited by our culture and experience to a fairly circumscribed range of interpretations for familiar symbols and images. Condit (1989) suggests that it is more accurate to call such texts polyvalent, in that the audience may differently value even the most consistently interpreted messages. However, Walkerdine (1990) has suggested that polyvalance is no more variable than polysemy. Offering a wider array of images with which girls might identify is problematic, because such a solution does not take into consideration culturally proscribed valance, "how we come to want what we want" (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 89). Learning social scripts, she argues, is not a rational act. However, a rationalist learner is precisely the kind of new teen girl portrayed by McRobbie in her new work. In her analysis of Britain's new best-selling magazine, *Just Seventeen*, she sees a new, more powerful vision of adolescent femininity, driven, she believes, by the powerful demands of enlightened girls as consumer force.

Does the kind of feminine beauty celebrated in teen magazines resonate with *all* girls, or is it a concept with specific appeal for girls of the dominant culture? When Walkerdine asks how "we come to want what we want," it is important to first examine who "we" are. I believe therein lies a key to undoing the desires that have limited too many women for too long.

## Research Questions

The questions to be addressed by this research are:

1) What part do cultural, racial, socioeconomic, and historical contexts play in how these girls interpret images of the feminine ideal found in teen magazines? Are there similarities among readings based on race, age, or family and social contexts?
2) Are girls in this study critical readers of fashion/beauty texts? Are teen magazines more accurately assessed as damaging influences, or as harmless entertainment?
3) How do participants define the importance of teen magazine content as they grow closer to the age and physical shape the texts define as the feminine ideal?

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research employs a feminist, qualitative method that is guided by three primary principles (Edwards, 1990):

1. Women's lives need to be addressed in their own terms.
2. Feminist research should not be on women, but for women.
3. Feminist methodology involves putting the researcher into the processes of production and interpreting results; one way I do this by writing in the first person and "putting the [myself] squarely in the scene" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 47).

In keeping with feminist principles that value the multiple interpretations individual females can bring to a text, qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews allow for expression of "resistive elements informing female cultural practices" (Schwichtenberg, 1992). Presentation of participants' accounts gives the neglected voices, interpretations, and cultural truths of girls and women center stage.

Interpretive data can never be said to describe an objective reality outside each participant's experience of it, as it is communicated to and interpreted through the researcher. Although my interpretations have been verified by my participants, certain aspects of the analysis such as the precise language of themes and ways of linking certain data, result from my own socially situated frames of reference. Therefore, the oriented perspective presented in my analysis is but one in what should be a wide array; other researchers working with similar subjects would no doubt enrich the description begun here.

## Researching Across Difference

> Should we theorize and conduct research as if the parts of a woman's identity are separable and interchangeable, for example, as if there is an essential "woman part" in each female speaker that we can examine and analyze without reference to her middle-class or Hispanic "part"? (Houston, 1992, p. 48).

Most of the studies I have read that focus on adolescence fail to take into consideration the concerns Houston raises -- in fact, participants' race is seldom discussed, nor are the implications of such racial differences addressed. Researchers subscribing to standpoint epistemology question whether a White researcher such as I should interview Black participants, given our different historical and cultural backgrounds (Collins, 1991). However, Black girls make up a substantial part of the audience for teen magazines, and my research efforts would be insufficient if I did not address them. I believed the richness of the data would be compromised if I relied on the observations of a second-party about girls' dress, comportment, mannerisms, room contexts, family interactions, and the like. In interpretive, qualitative approaches such as the one used in this study, the researcher serves as the instrument of data collection and analysis. Therefore, I decided to undertake my own interviews, with some built-in checks on my interpretations. First, as in all my qualitative efforts, I returned to girls with my interpretations post-interview for verification of my work by the participants, that is, through member checks. Two young African American university students heard about my work and volunteered to be my research assistants. We decided that as a check on the validity of cross-race interviewing, one of these assistants would conduct a focus group with Black participants to see how differently girls might express themselves with a same-race moderator.

## Selection of Participants

This paper is part of a larger, longitudinal study that traces the magazine interpretations of girls as they age from early to late adolescence. The data discussed in this paper is drawn from three groups of middle-class girls who are regular readers of teen magazines (six or more times a year); participants were selected via a snowball method. The first group is comprised of ten White girls, who were interviewed first when they were 12 to 14, and again when they were 16 to 18. Girls were recruited from the suburbs of two southern cities, Atlanta and Savannah, and from one major northern metropolitan area, Chicago.

The second and third groups include 16 African American girls -- eight in early adolescence, ages 12-14, and eight who are 17 and 18. All girls were from middle-class suburbs of Atlanta; all but two were introduced to me through a Black female friend or through an acquaintance of my friend. A description of all the participants and the interview contexts are available in the full text of this study.

### Interview Format

After agreeing to participate in this study, girls were provided with money to purchase the teen magazine of their choice, which they were asked to read before their scheduled interviews. The teen magazine of a girl's choice was used as a stimulus device during the interview, a technique called auto-driving. Auto-driving requires that participants be provided with photographs, music, text, or video as prompts for their interpretations (McCracken, 1988, p. 36). Through the use of this technique, girls were able to provide more vivid interpretations of the text and often used the magazine to strengthen descriptions of their reading experiences.

Interviews began with a grand tour question (Crabtree & Miller 1992, p. 81), "Tell me, and show me, how you read this magazine." This allowed the participant to talk at length, with the magazine serving as a prompt. Although I used the following interview guide to begin my initial exchanges with participants, I allowed the conversation to flow naturally and referred to the guide only to ensure I had covered all the issues I had intended.

As a check on my cross-race interviews with Black girls, several of these girls participated in a focus group lead by an African American moderator, a 21-year-old female college student. Six of eight girls in the older African American group agreed to participate, five of those six actually attended. Girls were provided with dinner in return for their participation in the focus group.

Questions from individual interviews were rephrased and asked again for verification. We also used the focus group as an opportunity for feedback on results from a partial, preliminary analysis and to clarify points girls made during their individual interviews

### Analysis

After transcribing tapes of participant interviews, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) method of categorizing data to establish emergent themes and organizing constructs. Transcripts were examined for instances of language, descriptions of content, particular uses of text, and units of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 344) to be grouped into categories (e.g., identity formation, self-expression through artifice). Using my variation of Lincoln and Guba's representation (p. 347) of constant comparison (Glaser

& Strauss, 1967), units were examined individually and sorted into sets that were subsequently labeled with the abstract functions that unified them. Next, I looked at function categories to see if they contained substantially more units from girls of one racial group. All data were categorized or judged to be irrelevant or so atypical as to not be thematically viable. Analysis was complete when categories were saturated with compelling data instances, emergent patterns and regularities were identified, and I determined that additional analysis would not contribute significantly to the findings

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 350).

## FINDINGS

### Images of the Feminine Ideal

> Lisa: What do you think the magazine says about girls?
> Faith, 14, Black: It says that they try to be perfect and stuff.
> Lisa: What do you think about that?
> Faith: I think that you ain't got to be perfect for nobody. You ain't got to try to prove yourself to nobody.

All the girls in this study, regardless of race, described the mediated ideal in similar terms. To the girl, the White participants described the magazine ideal as "thin," or "skinny," or even "scrawny." Her dress and makeup were seen as extremely fashionable and elaborate. This image was much the same as that of the typical girls they had described four years earlier. In the sense that the typical magazine model represents a media-endorsed standard of beauty, girls are well aware that the standard is White -- as was made explicit by their frequent references to long blonde hair and blue eyes.

Analysis of the 1994 and 1998 interviews with White girls yielded similar results: girls believed themselves virtually impervious to ill-effects from mediated images of ideal beauty, and yet they saw the influence of these images on other girls their age. Most girls explained their personal apathy toward the images as a result of strong self-esteem and more compelling interests such as succeeding in school.

Most White girls are satisfied with their overall looks, less satisfied with their body shape and weight. In response to *specific* images in the magazines, they frequently discounted the overall appearance of the models as atypical or unachievable, a strategy Martin and Gentry (1997) have defined as ego-defensive and self-enhancing.

That girls realize attaining the mediated ideal is difficult if not impossible does not mean that the image has no power over them. Whether media scholars believe fashion and beauty magazine images have an effect on girls' self-images, *girls themselves do.* Black and White girls spoke of the power of the image to "put a picture in your head," and in the heads of boys, about how highly desirable girls should look. Nearly all the girls found *some* aspect of the models' appearance they admired or wished to emulate. Likewise, nearly all girls said they had friends who negatively compared themselves to the images in the texts. On occasion, girls said they thought that models were effective in molding girls' ideas about beauty.

Whereas White girls had an endless stream of fairly uniform White models to confront, Black girls usually had only one or two well-known Black models to assess. Black girls never imagined futures for themselves as models -- instead, they pointed to the more infrequent images of African American performers or athletes, or people with power as the ones on which they build their fantasies. Kira, 17, said of all the people in her magazine, she'd choose to be the editor, "cause he probably makes a lot of money. But other than that, no one."

Black girls saw more to dislike than like in most images of the teen magazine ideal, which often exemplified characteristics Black girls didn't find attractive or enviable. The models' bodies were seen as unhealthily thin. Most girls saw the amount of time and effort required to achieve the magazines' ideal look as excessive. Black girls recognized a number of differences between what they and their friends defined as attractive, healthy, and appropriate appearance and that portrayed by the models in teen magazines.

For African American girls, beauty was as much a question of character as appearance. When asked to identify their favorite thing about themselves, White girls were apt to name two things: something physical and something in their character. Black girls consistently identified their favorite thing about themselves as something in their character -- seldom mentioning a physical characteristic. White girls' descriptions of what makes a girl beautiful focused almost exclusively on looks; African American girls' descriptions usually contained references to personality and attitude.

## The Thin, White Body Trap

In 1994, the early adolescent White girls in my study looked at teen magazine models' bodies as how they should have been but were not -- with some degree of anxiety. This was particularly the case when girls assessed the bodies of models, which for the most part reinforced the rigorous, largely unattainable standards girls set for themselves and others (Duke, 1994, p. 67). They looked forward to a day when their more mature bodies might approximate those of the older models, but they envisioned this as a natural course of events or a necessity, more the fulfillment of a social requirement than a deeply held personal desire.

For African American girls, no cultural imperative demands a certain body size although most girls agreed a buxom *shape* was appealing; therefore, they viewed magazine models and read or ignored the text on exercise and diet with virtually no anxiety. Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison indicates that people seek out similar others against which to evaluate themselves; Black girls said they seldom saw Black models in their magazines and dismissed most of the ones they did see as either very light or very dark and exotic.

Whereas young adolescent White girls were transfixed by the images of the models' bodies, African American girls assess themselves and the bodies they see represented in the magazines with different eyes. They see "sick looking" bodies where White girls see perfect ones. Black girls see average women where White girls see heavy women. For example, Sylvie estimates her ideal size as size 12 or 14. She thinks the models in the magazines wear a size 10. This is in contrast to the size four or six White girls were striving for and estimating as the size of magazine models. Black girls were generally dismissive of the models and model figures they saw in fashion and beauty magazines; they espoused a philosophy of self-acceptance and embraced a full range of body shapes as acceptable.

Many Black girls mentioned the roles their mothers, grandmothers, and boyfriends play in reinforcing a confident body image. It is worth considering how Black girls will negotiate the tension between mediated and cultural ideals as more African American and other minority models take center stage in the pages of fashion and beauty magazines.

## The Great Divide: Contrasting Views of Cosmetics

In my initial study of young adolescent White girls and teen magazines, I found that girls had an ambivalent attitude toward cosmetics and the ubiquitous makeup ads and features in the text. Almost all the girls wore makeup, but none of them wanted to appear to be wearing it. At this young age, makeup was viewed by girls as a necessity -- in their age of acne, makeup was a tool for returning to normal appearance, rather than an agent of change or improvement. Magazines capitalized on this necessity by constantly helping girls identify their flaws and offering advice on how to fix them; "While on the one hand exhorting girls to 'be themselves,' girls magazines simultaneously illustrate the necessity for their advice on alteration should the self deviate from a fashionable ideal" (Duke, 1994, p. 76).

White girls' attitudes toward makeup did not change significantly with age. Four years later, the same girls spoke in detail and at great length about makeup and its place in their lives, even if they did not wear much makeup on a daily basis. White girls often spoke of not looking like themselves or looking "awful" without makeup:

> Lisa: You didn't think you looked awful before [age 13] -- what changed?
> Rita, 16, White: Well, I don't know really. ...When I started putting on makeup, it's like when I took it off, then I wouldn't look like myself...
> Lisa: You only look like yourself when you have the makeup on?
> Rita: ...I mean, I look like myself, but I just think it's like a better image of myself when I have makeup on. ...I feel insecure going somewhere without makeup.

At 13, White girls wore makeup to make their skin look normal. At 17, makeup has a different normalizing function. For the girls most heavily invested in makeup as a daily ritual, cosmetics were a way of blending into a group of similarly made-up girls. Girls learn how to talk about makeup from the text in teen magazines, and the words girls use to describe cosmetics and the attributes they look for in the makeup they buy seem to be drawn directly from magazine advertisements and articles.

In contrast with the uneasy alliance White girls had with cosmetics, African American girls usually described makeup as unnecessary and largely foreign to their experience of maturing into young women. Few of the Black girls in this study wore cosmetics on anything other than special occasions. Only two of the sixteen Black girls interviewed expressed *any* interest in makeup. The self-confidence most of the Black girls felt about their appearance was striking in their comments on makeup. Seventeen-year-old Davida's comments were typical: "There's nothing wrong with my face to put on makeup for."

Most Black girls echoed Kira's comments about the makeup tips and cosmetic advertising in teen magazines, "They don't have anything to do with me." In general, African American girls believed the makeup information in the magazines was uninteresting because they wore cosmetics only rarely. The colors were frequently seen as incompatible with their skin tones, their socially significant others such as peers, parents, and boys, did not encourage cosmetic use, and girls said they saw little change in their appearance when they did wear makeup. The cosmetic experience seemed frivolous to most of the African American girls in this study, but they understood precisely how the beauty tips in teen magazines apply to

White girls -- as prescriptive for acceptance and success. Nicole noted the White girls who sit in class, reapplying their makeup: "Like, because they *have to.* I don't have time to worry about that."

## Summary

Analysis of the data showed that most African American girls in this study were uninterested in striving for or achieving the ideal feminine physique, as the magazines portray it; similarly, there was little interest in makeup and grooming advice that was seen as inappropriate for African American girls, due either to formulations intended for European American girls or African American girls' belief that cosmetics were superfluous to being attractive. African American girls tended to evaluate themselves and others on character and personality rather than appearance. Subsequently, they showed more interest in articles on singers, athletes, actors, and real girls than in pictures of models.

Most European American girls maintained their interest in cosmetics from early adolescence and contended that some kind of makeup was necessary for girls to look their best. They admired the physiques of models and agreed that the amount of self-denial and hard work necessary to achieve such a body was admirable but difficult to emulate. European American girls' evaluative statements about themselves and others generally centered on appearance; personality was something a girl depended on if she was unattractive.

African American girls see teen magazines as having limited utility as a source of information on fashion, beauty, and product information. The magazines provided a one-way mirror, through which African American girls could see European American girls and all the trappings of European American beauty culture, but the White producers and consumers of the beauty culture seemed unable to look out and see them. African American girls simply read around the images and information they perceived as excluding them and focused on what they saw as the truly generic content, such as health information.

White girls seemed unaware of the bias in their magazines until they were asked to consider the material in light of racial representation. Due in part to their exposure to White-oriented teen magazines, African American girls were explicit and opinionated about White girls' orientation to a beauty standard Black girls did not share. White girls were generally unclear about what African American girls would desire in a teen publication, but claimed mainstream teen magazines were appropriate for girls of any race, regardless of the race and ethnicity of the models portrayed, because the content was universally appealing.

European American girls, who are more culturally aligned with the material in the major teen magazines, consistently invest more authority in the magazines' counsel and images of beauty, regardless of age. In early adolescence, European American girls regarded the well-developed bodies of the magazine models as promises of bodies to come as they matured. The text served as a crystal ball, illustrating for girls the ideal they might one day approximate, and a map, showing the way to satisfaction and beauty via cosmetics, diet, fashion, and ultimately, the opposite sex. However, even the interpretations of these girls must be read in context. White girls who used content to self-evaluate negatively in their early adolescent years tended to read in a similar way when they were older; a compliant or resistant stance toward the magazines stayed relatively consistent from ages 13 to 17.

Girls of both races looked for confirmation of ideas, attitudes and behaviors about which they were less than sure. The portraits of real teens featured in *Seventeen's* "School Zone" feature were especially powerful in this regard -- "School Zone" depicted actual teens of style, and no contrived fashion layout could match the power of the real in enticing girls to entertain new possibilities for self-presentation.

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Although media critics speak of the negative influence mediated ideals of beauty have on girls, the underlying assumption of such a statement is that girls view media as their looking glass, in which idealized versions of themselves are reflected. While this may be true in many ways for girls who see in teen magazines images congruent with their European American physical characteristics and cultural ideals, the girls of color whom I interviewed interpret these images differently. Their resistant interpretations of White-oriented material in fashion and beauty magazines make sense in light of research that has shown African American girls have higher levels of self-esteem and more positive body images than White girls.

By choosing to read teen magazines produced for a primarily White audience, it could be said the Black girls in this study are making a choice equivalent to those of the minority children in Clark and Clark's (1947) doll study – choosing White images or dolls over Black ones. Clark and Clark's study, and subsequent, similar studies, have been said to demonstrate minority children's negative identification with their race. However, the observations of Baldwin, Brown, and Hopkins (1995) clarify the questionable assumptions that have allowed a Black self-hatred theory to proliferate in spite of conflicting findings; such studies "…propose that Black people, especially children, acquire their self-conception from their interaction with the Euro-American community rather than from the African American community" (p. 49). The authors conclude that the Eurocentric paradigm that orients most research of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds must be challenged and that research involving African Americans must consider their Africentric cultural orientation.

Prior to conducting this research, I, too, thought one of the outcomes might be that, because African American girls are largely excluded from the dominant discourse on feminine beauty, those who read teen fashion and beauty magazines would have a *more negative* self-image than White girls who read the same material. However, quite *the opposite was true* -- African American girls recognized the magazines were unable to guide them to ways of looking and behaving that are valued in their families and cultural communities. Instead of translating their relative exclusion from the major teen magazines into negative self-assessments, Black girls generally viewed the magazines as biased and largely irrelevant to their ideas about beauty, though enjoyable for other reasons. However, it does appear that *older* African American girls' interpretations were more culturally aligned with those of the African American community writ large --the culture derives its power not only from the values and ideas communicated to girls, but also from girls' *experience* in the culture. With age, girls grow in their experience of their culture and solidify their racial identity.

Why, then, do African American girls purchase these magazines? The reasons differ for younger and older girls. Younger African American girls did not seem to recognize that much of the content was oriented to White girls. For example, Chris, 14, was mystified by makeup tips that would make sense only on European American skin. She would try them and wonder why they did not work as the magazine said they would.

Women's and girls' differing cultural legacies cannot be overlooked in any analysis of how they interact with fashion and beauty texts. Andi, a 17-year-old Black girl observed, White girls have *had* to learn the lessons of femininity embedded in teen magazines if they were to succeed in attracting a successful, White man. Although fashion and beauty texts like teen magazines may lose much of their relevance as White women become more financially self-reliant, the texts consistently demonstrate for girls that the goal of achieving a pleasing appearance should be paramount in a their lives. White girls struggled to dismiss this textual imperative as frivolous, but did so inconsistently and with difficulty – material they said was worthy of their attention and what they actually attended to and read were frequently at odds.

I believe that dialogue between African American and White women about their different views of beauty, romance, and identity is overdue. The *range* of beauty embraced by the Black community serves as a dynamic model for how the dominant culture can progress in redefining femininity for the good of all women.

Media critics contend that as long as the vast majority of producers and consumers of media are White, the authentic experiences and images of other cultures will have difficulty coming to light (Gitlin, 1983; Reeves, 1987; Staples & Jones, 1985). To date, the most prevalent images of African-American women and girls in mainstream teen magazines closely approximate White standards of attractiveness. On that basis, they are easily dismissed by most African American girls in this study, who feel no need to compare themselves to women whom they say are "barely Black."

It might be argued that teen magazines should include more culturally accurate models of beauty and to define these images as desirable in the text. To do so, it seems, would no doubt provide African American girls with a more satisfying reading experience. Unfortunately, it might also threaten the relatively sure footing they have against the ill effects they say the medium has on White girls. African American participants cited the Black family and culture as most influential in Black girls' extremely positive assessments of their appearance and self-worth (see also Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). It is vital to consider how African American cultural values, which have thus far served Black girls well, might be co-opted by media that feed on feminine insecurity.

Teen magazines and other marketers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the needs of people of color, for one simple reason: The U.S. Census estimates that by year 2010, 39% of the teen population will be made up of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other non-Whites. Once Black girls' perspective on the mediated beauty culture has been changed from that of outsider to insider, will African American girls lose some of the critical distance that has allowed them to sustain relatively high levels of body confidence and self-esteem? Alternatively, would the celebration of broader, more diverse standards of beauty ease European American girls' relatively negative physical self-assessments? The result of more and different media representations of feminine beauty will result in a narrowing of the interpretive gap that now separates European- and African American girls -- for better and worse.

The foregoing discussion has important implications for why magazines have greater influence on some girls than others. Girls who approach the text *with a more developed self-concept and positive self-image* -- "I am like this, and I like the way I am" -- negotiate the text from a position of relative power. Obviously, the development of a more concrete self-identity is a function of age, but this study demonstrated that culture can also be an important positive influence in how girls read and use fashion and beauty texts.

African American girls delineated how their experiences as women of color influenced the way they viewed the text. Many middle-class Black girls said they believe they are more discerning, critical readers of texts such as teen magazines because of how they were raised. African American girls observed that their White classmates' unhealthy focus on looks was encouraged not only by the magazines, but by White mothers as well, who steered their daughters into behaviors like makeup play from an early age. African American girls often expressed sympathy for White girls, whom they saw as unwitting victims in a quixotic beauty quest of their own making. They saw this emphasis on unrealistic beauty standards being reinforced by White male classmates, whom some Black girls felt were as influenced by mediated ideals as White females.

African American girls in this study frequently referred to cross-generational negotiations of femaleness in their families. How grandmothers and mothers felt about their bodies and self-presentation was far more important to Black girls than White girls. For African American girls, *mothers and grandmothers* were frequently cited as purveyors of beauty norms -- if they did not need makeup, why should their (grand)daughters? Alternatively, White girls seldom mentioned mothers as influential in their feelings about their bodies or appearance, other than in instances where girls spoke of first wearing makeup borrowed from their mothers.

One African American participant argued that the experience of being a racial minority made Black girls less apt to buy into a value system that placed a premium on a standardized way of looking. They understood what it was to be judged less than based on color and resisted judging and disparaging others on media-reinforced, White standards of beauty. Black girls' view of what constituted beauty was simply less restrictive -- they understood and appreciated White standards of beauty as well as Black. For example, whereas White girls were striving for a narrowly defined body size and shape, Black girls saw unattractiveness only at the far reaches of either side of the weight continuum -- however, they were far more likely to describe a girl as too thin than too heavy. Their more realistic, inclusive view of the female physical norm was reinforced by elder female family members, who were said to view heavier girls as healthier, and by African American males, who prize "thick" or amply filled out girls as sexually appealing and desirable.

I offer this research as what it is: A study by a White woman studying, in part, African American girls -- we share a common sex and social class, which may give me some insight into these aspects of their lives. However, I can make no claim to full, personal understanding of how their race has interacted with their sex and social class to make their experience unique to African Americans. I can only offer the voices of the girls, and my verified interpretations, as partial descriptors of their perceptions and lived experiences. Another study, conducted entirely by African American researchers, would help offer a more complete picture of how African American girls interpret media such as teen magazines. Likewise, in the interest of limiting my study to a manageable size, I have *only* studied European American and African American, middle-class girls here -- their combined number make up the vast majority of teen magazine readers. However, as the percentage of people of color in this country continues to grow, so grows the likelihood that their readership will make up an ever-increasing percentage of the audience for this type of publication.

Although it is believed that most of the girls who read the magazines regularly come from families with moderate discretionary income, there may be a large number of girls from working class families or families on public assistance who also read them. Also, teen magazines have a huge pass-along readership and are available for girls to read in schools, public libraries, and at points of purchase. I welcome and encourage the addition of as many different voices as possible to develop a more richly textured, nuanced, and satisfying description of how girls use mainstream fashion and beauty texts.

It has never been my objective to champion any particular way of being a woman. To the contrary, I will be pleased when the list of characteristics and behaviors associated with women is so extensive and filled with antithesis that we can no longer be defined or limited by it. What I am opposed to is the implication that other-oriented modes of behavior and appearance should occupy *so much* of our minds and efforts and that current mass-mediated models of femininity are largely *the only ones* to which adolescent girls and most women are ever exposed. The damage is done not through individual images, but the collective, univocal, monotone montage.

Walkerdine (1990) has claimed such a view misses the point, because it does not consider how the montage is maintained by consent, how girls come to "want what they want" (p. 89), for example, to see images of female perfection. However, this inquiry has demonstrated that American teen magazines are lagging behind girls' desires to see new, more inclusive images of femininity. *Seventeen*'s "School Zone," a feature in one of the magazines that highlighted real girls with a wide range of styles and cultural backgrounds, was far more interesting to most girls than were the routine models in more stylized spreads. However, "School Zone" is comprised of only a small number of pages in one publication; the remainder of the images in this and other magazines are consistently idealized and, in the view of this study's participants, less inclusive of minority girls than should be. In this regard, McRobbie's (1994) observation that British girls are pushing to their magazines to portray girls and women more positively and realistically may foreshadow a similar process in updating American teen publications.

Roberts (1993) has suggested that the polysemic nature of many media texts should be positively exploited; teachers, parents and other adults with influence in girls' lives can help guide girls to more constructive interpretations of media. However, my observations are similar to those of Currie (1997), who noted that at a time in girls' lives when parents have generally diminished influence anyway, adolescents tend to read teen magazines in isolation. Therefore, I contend it is at the level of production that interested adults can most effectively assert their influence -- demanding a more complete range of feminine images, attitudes, and behaviors to fill the pages of girls' magazines and minds.

In doing so, we must be aware of how more realistic images may be used by teen magazines, whose success is largely dependent on the income derived from advertising. Mainstream teen magazines are increasingly using images of real girls in the place of the professional beauties and amateur lookalikes that dominated past publications. If images of real girls rather than models ever become the mode, it may be more difficult for girls to opt out (Martin & Gentry, 1997) of comparing themselves to magazine images. Younger white girls tended to defer comparing themselves to the models they saw in 1994 teen magazines, contending that the models were older and more developed. As they grew older, most of these girls continued to distance themselves from the professional models, whom they knew to be atypical. White girls were more successful in resisting notions of beauty related to makeup and fashion than body shape, which in a sense represented a physiological reality rather than a trend. As one girl in my 1994 study noted, "*Some* girls…must look like that, or else they wouldn't be in the magazine." It was even easier for African American girls to opt out of self-evaluation, given that they seldom saw their racial equivalents represented in teen magazines. Black girls have the additional advantage of a cultural background that embraces a broader definition of feminine attractiveness.

It is imperative that future research determine whether images of girls who are not professional models, selected because they are presumably more typical and representative, invite more image-comparison among readers. An important complement to such a study would be to track how such portrayals of real girls may change (e.g., become more made up) as they become more prevalent in the text and to monitor how the authority of the family and community as an arbiter of African American beauty is affected by the inclusion of more minority models and real girls of color in mainstream teen magazines.

My research goal is to make women and girls more aware of and complicit in redefining systems that exert such profound effects on our values, behavior, and destinies. The goal of this research effort is to increase awareness of how one subset of the media, teen magazines, are used by girls in defining who they are and what it means to be a woman in American society. It is my hope that, through the words of girls, we can learn more about our own becomings and initiate more positive influence on women yet to be.

> Nicole, 17, Black (from focus group): There is the TV answer, 'Be yourself, find out who you are.' But I think part of it is, you gotta figure out what's important to you, what's going to get you where you need to be. Once you figure that out, you know where to draw the line between what the media tells you and where you really need to be.

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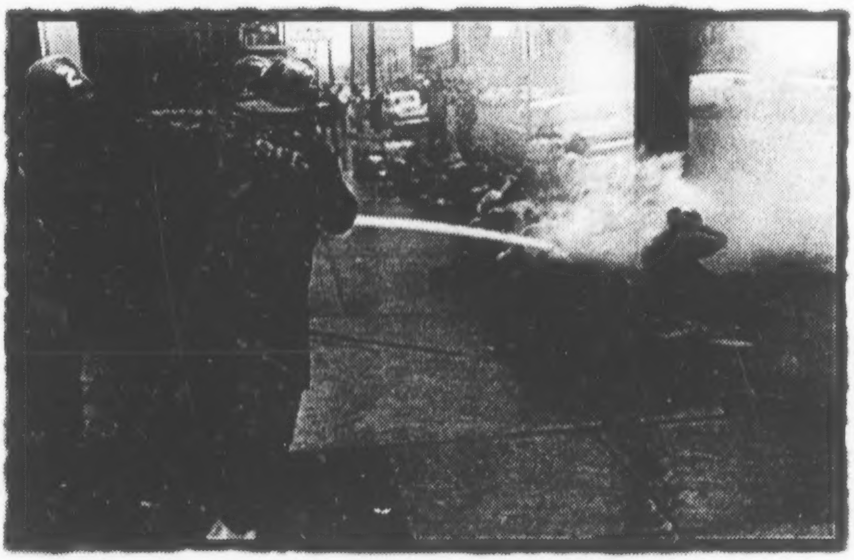
# Charles Moore's *Life* Magazine Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, 1958-1965.



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AEJMC 1999 Convention

*To view the photographs discussed in this paper, please visit:*
**www.civilrightsphotos.com**

# Charles Moore's *Life* Magazine Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, 1958-1965.

On September 3, 1958, Charles Moore, a young photographer for the *Montgomery Advertiser*, witnessed an argument between the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and two policeman on the steps of the City Recorders' Court. Moore's good fortune that day was in stark contrast with King's. Moore was the only member of the media to witness King's subsequent arrest, and his picture of the local minister being manhandled during the police booking became one of the most significant photographs of the civil rights movement.[1] King was taken to the back of the jail where he was frisked, roughed-up and tossed into a cell.[2]

When *Life* picked up the picture from the *Associated Press* wire on September 15, it would be the first of Moore's celebrated civil rights photos to be published in the magazine. By 1965, the photographer would grow weary of years of violence--of hatred, street battles and the searing taste of tear gas--having witnessed many of the most significant events of the era. After documenting the fighting surrounding James Meredith's bloody admission to the University of Mississippi, the dogs being turned on protesters in Birmingham and the savagery of the civil rights march at Selma, Moore booked an around-the-world ticket on Pan Am in 1965 and would not return home for eight months.[3]

Through the work of Moore and other heralded photographers such as Flip Schulke and Gordon Parks, *Life*, along with King's savvy in spreading his message throughout the media, is credited with giving national prominence to what had until the mid-1950s been a regional story.[4] During the 1950s and 1960s the weekly *Life* was the nation's most influential media outlet, reaching more citizens than any television program and read by more than half the adult population of the United States.[5]

Although many letters to the editor protested *Life's* so-called liberal bias in covering civil rights, the magazine also was criticized for its conservatism.[6] When it published eleven pages of Moore's graphic photos of rioting in Birmingham, Alabama, in May 1963, it described the movement as a "crusade" and used sympathetic headlines such as "The Dogs' Attack is Negroes' Reward." However, the same article criticized King's non-violent but provocative actions.

> The pictures on these eleven pages are frightening. They are frightening because of the brutal methods being used by white policemen in Birmingham, Ala. against Negro demonstrators. They are frightening because the Negro strategy of "nonviolent direct action" invites that very brutality--and welcomes it as a way to promote the Negroes' cause, which, *under the law*, is right.[7]

Indeed, the article quoted no blacks at all and followed with a sidebar story interviewing sixteen Birmingham whites.[8] In the introduction to the interviews, *Life* stated, "The Negroes of Birmingham know what they want and how they want to get it. The white people of the city, shaken by recent events, are perplexed about what to do." Moore felt that the magazine's only bias was in its zeal to right the wrongs of desegregation. Despite being a southern, white male he was sickened by the injustice that he witnessed while covering the civil rights movement.[9]

In his 1964 book about the violence in Birmingham, *Why We Can't Wait*, King's comments illuminate the drama contained in Moore's photos and the power of the national media, of which *Life* was most influential. " The brutality . . . was caught, as a fugitive from a penitentiary is often caught, in gigantic circling spotlights. It was imprisoned in a luminous glare revealing the naked truth to the whole world."[10]

Like King, Moore was the son of a Baptist minister. The photographer was reared in Tuscumbia, Alabama,[11] living in a working class community as "a real tough little kid who grew up in a community of tough kids."[12] His father would invite Charles along as he was sometimes invited to preach in the normally segregated black churches nearby. Although he knew few blacks growing up, he remembers that a kind man once walked him home when he became lost and wandered into a "colored town" when he was six.[13] He credits his father's insistence that no racial epithets be uttered in the family's house for his own tolerance. "Although my Dad had few black friends, he told us never to use the 'n' word," Moore said.[14]

Moore had not set out to be a news photographer. After a stint in the Marine Corps and training in fashion photography at the Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, California, he returned home to Alabama in 1957 and settled for a job photographing in an Olan Mills portrait studio. Although the industrious Moore was soon offered a job as regional manager for the studio chain, he went to Montgomery to see the local newspaper's chief photographer, Joe Holloway. As the first of Moore's photographic mentors, Holloway was impressed with the twenty-six-year-old's knowledge of a Rolleiflex camera and ability to build a rapport with models on the site of a fashion shoot.

When he began working at the paper in 1957, Moore had no knowledge of the national story that had occurred in Montgomery just a year before; Rosa Parks, a local seamstress, had refused to ride in the back of a city bus, as was the rule in the South, touching off a massive boycott. "To be honest, I was a young kid. I didn't know what was going on in the world. I had no interest. My head was into camping, wildlife and fashion. I wanted to photograph beauty," Moore said.[15] He had no idea that his pictures would do far more than help publicize King's efforts; they also would lead to national outrage culminating in President Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. By that time, Moore's dramatic *Life* photos were given credit for helping to influence the legislation's passage.[16]

### **King's Arrest:** *Fueling the movement*

Before King's arrest on the courthouse steps, Moore had met him briefly on a routine assignment at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church just a few blocks from the paper. As a typical southern newspaper of its time, the *Advertiser* relegated "Negro News" to a separate section. Still, the paper did not ignore the growing national prominence of its local minister,[17] and Moore soon began to realize the importance of the role he was playing.[18]

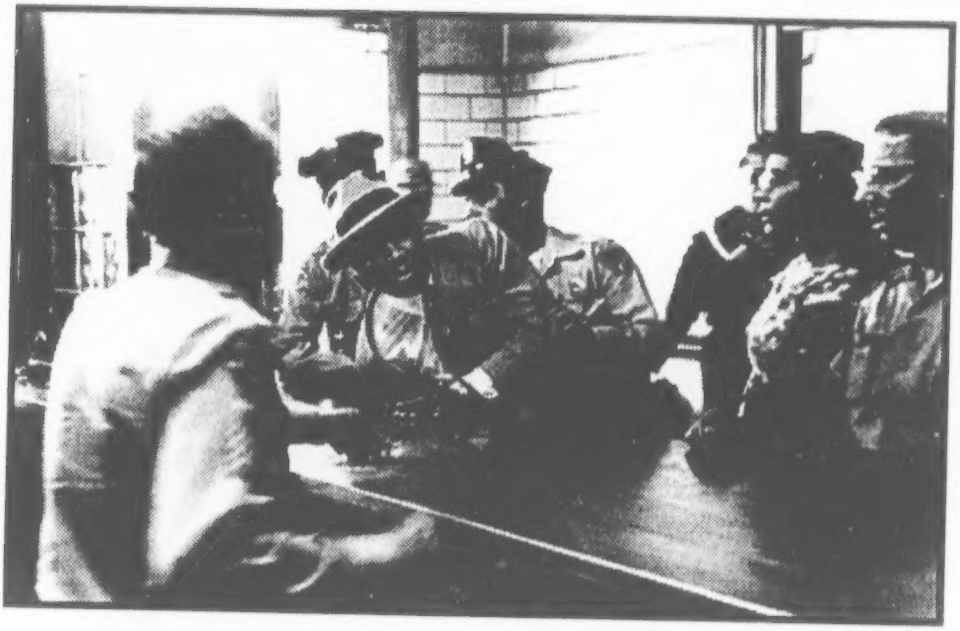
> When I met Dr. King, I was just at the beginning of my career. I never knew black people on a personal level because there was segregation. I had been to his church meetings and didn't have to go to many to be absolutely fascinated by this man. When I went down to meet him, I photographed him at the pulpit with a cross behind his head. I got down low to get the power of this man. I have to say, 'Yeah, I was on my knees to King.' I became fascinated [by the] power of his oratory. From then on I wanted to cover him. I wanted every assignment I could get."[19]

In September 1958, King attempted to enter a crowded courtroom for a hearing involving his fellow pastor and key aide, Ralph Abernathy. Moore had heard that King might be there and on his own initiative decided to drop by. "The police were telling him he couldn't go in and were giving him a hard time. He said, 'I'll just stay here' [on the courthouse steps] and refused to leave," Moore said.[20]

The two inexperienced officers suddenly decided to arrest King, unaware of who he was. His wife, Coretta, protested but was told, "Just nod your head and you'll go to jail, too."[21] Although King was not being pushed, one officer twisted the minister's arm as the three walked a block and a half to the police booking area. "I saw an opening on the other side of the counter. I ran there real quickly. Nobody stopped me, and I quickly took a few frames from behind the counter,"[22] Moore said. (see picture A)

When the picture went out on the wire, two *Life* staffers appeared in town on the next day, photographer, Gray Villete and Dick Stolley, who later became managing editor. "They got in touch with me and I had them to my home for dinner. It was my first time with *Life* magazine people."[23]

At the time, Moore did not understand the significance of his picture, but many others did. During the next two days, the national press corps poured into town. Rather than pay a fine for loitering, King was intent on serving his fourteen-day sentence in jail. To diffuse further publicity, Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers released him, saying that he was merely saving the taxpayers money by paying King's $10 fine.[24] "King was a master at using the media. The significance was that the whole world was aware that Martin Luther



Picture A

King had been put in jail," Moore later realized.[25]

When the picture was published in *Life* twelve days later, Moore was pleased but wished the magazine could have published his eight-picture sequence of the incident instead of just a single photo. Once before, *Life* had published a full-page fire picture of Moore's, but its editors did not choose to give prominent play to King's arrest. The photograph occupied one-sixth of a page and was used with three other pictures accompanying a story about "mostly quiet" civil rights integration.[26] Stories given far more dominant play in the same issue included "Chinese 'Reds' impose a blockade on Quemoy" and an article about fixing charges on television quiz shows. A prominent story on race riots in Britain also dwarfed the coverage of unrest at home.[27]

Even with the understated play in *Life*, the photo's publication in the influential magazine triggered further outrage and a rush of financial aid for King's Montgomery Improvement Association. Although he had once been asked to appear on television's *Meet the Press*, King was now even better known on a national level; his influence would soon grow to a fevered pitch. By the next time that King would be photographed by Moore during an arrest, the photographer would be on assignment for *Life*.

### **"Ole Miss":** *Moore makes his mark as a freelancer*

By 1962, Moore had been his newspaper's chief photographer for four years after Holloway had moved on to a career at AP. He was ready for a change and decided to take a room in the French Quarter of New Orleans for a ten-day shooting vacation. He met a woman on the street who turned out to be the wife of local district attorney Jim Garrison, who would later rise to prominence with his controversial views on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Garrison helped Moore gain access to the late night world of jazz bars, musicians and strippers, subjects that were otherwise off-limits to outsiders. "When I got back to the paper, I knew I wanted to travel more and reach out to a new audience,"[28] Moore said. He gave two-weeks notice and moved to New York anticipating a lucrative freelance career.

"It didn't work. I spent three months and was hanging out in the West Village. I hated New York and my money was going."[29] Before heading back to Alabama, Moore befriended Milt Freir, a representative from Leica, who urged him to go see Howard Chapnick, the influential founder of the Black Star picture agency. In his book, *Truth Needs No Ally*, Chapnick described Moore as disenchanted. "He had come to New York to make his way into photojournalism and after three months had found a cold, unyielding and professionally unrewarding city."[30]

Chapnick decided to give Moore a small weekly guarantee. "We talked and Howard liked the idea I was giving up New York. 'I think you can do some really good work down there,' he told me," Moore remembers.[31] Chapnick would later credit Moore with documenting the important events that defined the movement.

> Rather than encourage Charles Moore to stay in New York to pursue his career, I told him I felt one of the great stories in American history was unfolding in the South. He came from the South and understood it. Going back to Alabama to document the events taking place there would provide the chance for Charles to do work he was uniquely qualified for.[32]

Still, upon his return to Montgomery, Moore faced another two months of frustration. He missed the newspaper and had little to do.[33] "I felt like a stranger in hell back in Montgomery. I was struggling,"[34] he said. But Moore had a sudden turn of luck in September when he ran into *Life's* Miami Bureau Chief, Dick Billings, in Oxford, Mississippi.

Black student James Meredith had attempted to register at the University of Mississippi and the state's defiant Governor, Ross Barnett, ignored a federal court order by declaring himself the university's emergency registrar, and personally and physically barred Meredith.[35] The Governor was seen as a folk hero in his state and hated what he considered *Life's* liberal bias, refusing to be photographed or interviewed. Moore's contacts from five years of covering state government paid off as he assured Billings that he could get a picture.

After being granted exclusive access to photograph Barnett, Moore says that he did not dare mention the word *"Life."* Billings was thrilled with the pictures. "After today, you're working for us,""[16] he was told. At the time, a mob of more than 2,000 was descending on the college town, intent on blocking Meredith at any cost.

Moore's ascension to the ranks of *Life* photographers could not have come at a more dangerous time. U.S. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy sent 200 federal marshals to protect Meredith, and each other. Several other *Life* shooters were on the scene, some with combat experience. With two days to go before federal marshals would attempt to escort Meredith to his first class, Moore knew that it would be a violent weekend.

Word got out that he was working for the magazine. A pack of enraged white students shoved their way into Moore's hotel room, shouting and cursing. One began to choke him before the former Golden Gloves boxer pushed him away. "I've never seen such hate in anyone's face before. It was like I were vermin. . . . To him I was worse than 'a nigger.' I was a white nigger. And worse than that I was a white *Life* magazine nigger."[17]

On the street, the mob waved confederate flags. Some even loaded guns as they waited for Meredith's arrival, not knowing he had already been hidden at a campus dormitory. Local lawmen, urged on by the Governor, were defiant of the federal authorities as well, intent on preventing the enrollment of the first black student there. One of Moore's most chilling photographs showed local, plain-clothed policemen chuckling while one practiced a swing with a billy club before the start of the inevitable rioting. (see picture B) "They were talking about what they're going to do to the U.S. Marshals, laughing and showing how they would take care of them.""[18] Moore said.

Moore had to make some quick decisions. The local police had blocked the campus, forbidding the press to enter. Readily identifiable as a news photographer, he was threatened

Picture B

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again. "I was told, 'You nigger lovers had better go home' . . . and that this guy and his brother were out with their shotguns looking for me.'"[39]

After buying a gas mask at a local Army and Navy store, Moore sneaked onto the campus with the help of a brave student that he remembers only as 'John.' The student drove a VW beetle, and Moore stashed his cameras in the vehicle's trunk. "The cops searched the car but didn't search the trunk, which was up front. That's how I got in,"[40] he said.

It was Sunday evening and as darkness fell, the rioting began. The mob had surrounded the school's administration building, the Lyceum, and started slashing tires and throwing rocks. Soon, it was a siege. Earlier, Moore had decided to bluff his way into the building, where 200 unarmed marshals were holed-up. Accompanied by a freelance writer who also was working for *Life*, Moore banged on the door, telling the guard that he was desperately ill and had to go to the toilet. The ruse worked, and the two were forgotten about in the ensuing chaos.[41] Outside, cars were set on fire and when a lead pipe knocked a marshal unconscious, the lawmen began to fire tear gas at the mob. Moore darted outside for a short time and ducked behind a jeep as a shotgun blast from the crowd wounded an *AP* reporter. "If you stayed outside and used a flash, you would die. Molotov cocktails were being thrown all over,"[42] he said.

It was no safer inside. As soon as marshals fired the gas into the crowd, it would drift back inside, filling the building. Moore wore a gas mask through the evening as he photographed the wounded marshals, several shot and bleeding. After hearing about the melee, President Kennedy decided to send in federal troops but they did not arrive until the next day. Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach was trapped inside the building, and Moore overheard him pleading on the telephone with Bobby Kennedy.

> 'They've got guns out there, Bobby, they've got guns. Our men are being shot . . . .'[43] He was trying to convince Kennedy to let them have weapons to protect themselves and Kennedy said no. They had billy clubs, that's all. The marshals were shooting tear gas to keep the crowd from rushing them. They

> [the crowd] even stole a bulldozer and were attacking the building with it."[44]

When it was over, twenty-eight marshals had been shot and 160 were injured. Moore had been the only photographer inside and had exclusive shots of the wounded. (see pictures C and D) Later, he learned that a French reporter and a local repairman had been killed in the night-long battle. "We put our lives on the line. I was just sitting on a trash can in front of the building, surrounded by smashed TV cameras and tear gas canisters. We were totally wiped out,"[45] Moore said.

The magazine's reporters and Moore were ordered to rest up in a Memphis hotel room. One of the correspondents made up a mock press card, called a 'SCREW' card, standing for "*Southern Correspondents Reporting Equality Wars.*" For his bravery, Moore was issued the first one. "I'm real proud of that because I have card '#1,'"[46] he said. He received a phone call from Black Star telling him that *Life* was overwhelmed with his work. For the next three years he would earn a reputation as the photographer most able to gain uncanny access to the front lines of the civil rights cause.

A thirteen-page layout in the October 12 issue was dominated by Moore's work. But some of the letters to the editor that were published on October 26 and November 2 were critical of both the magazine and the federal involvement in the university's affairs. One letter complained about stereotyping when the magazine wrote, "A blood-covered *red-neck* is propelled in the door, guided by two angry marshals."[47] Carolyn P. Nemrow, of Boston, wrote, "President Kennedy has enough of the nation's journalistic sheep jumping to give its condemnation of Ole Miss Affairs. When will people realize that the issue is not Meredith, it is state sovereignty versus ever-growing federal intervention?"[48]

### **Birmingham:** *Of barking dogs and walls of water*

Moore soon moved to Miami, and after considering a job with the *Miami Herald*, was promised steady work with *Life* by Billings. He was often teamed with reporter Michael Durham and in April 1963, the two were assigned to cover rising tensions in Mississippi and

Picture C

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Picture D

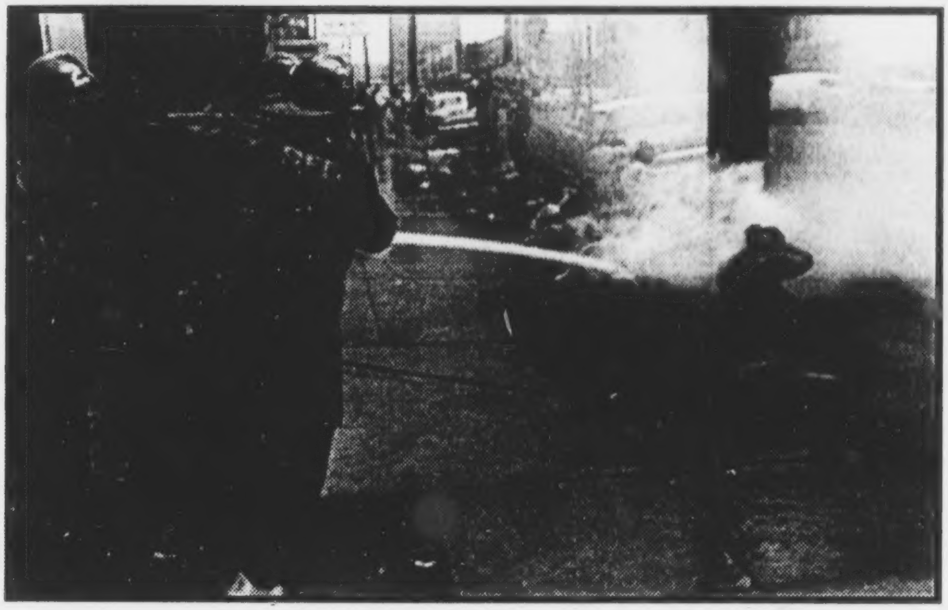
Alabama. After William Moore, a mailman, was shot and killed while walking to protest segregation, Moore photographed protesters along The Freedom March that followed a path through three states.[49]

At nearly the same time, King was arrested for organizing protests by school children and from jail would write his famous treatise outlining his philosophy of civil disobedience.[50] Although a state injunction had been issued against King's protests, he responded by saying, "We've got an injunction from heaven."[51] Moore had a strong picture of King and Abernathy walking toward their inevitable arrest along with a series from the march. However, neither was published in the magazine. One of the biggest American news' stories of the century, *The Bay of Pigs*, the failed U.S. led attack on Cuba, pushed civil rights out of the pages of *Life* for a short time.

The most influential pictures of Moore's career were taken over five days beginning on May 3. Birmingham was considered the nation's most segregated city, and the photographer had a hunch that he and Durham should go to the city after hearing reports on the radio about escalating tensions there.[52] Five minutes after the journalists arrived in Kelly Ingram Park, the scene of anti-segregation demonstrations, firemen had been ordered by Police Commissioner Bull Connor to bring out their hoses to contain the swelling crowd.

Moore crawled on the pavement and took a position between the firemen and the protesters, who were getting pummeled by a virtual wall of water. The scene disgusted Moore but he felt a responsibility to keep shooting. One of the firemen told him later, "We're supposed to fight fires, not people."[53] (see picture E)

One of Moore's most remarkable photographs showed three students forced against a brick wall by a fierce spray of water propelled at 100 pounds per square inch. (see picture F) Fourteen-year-old Carolyn McKinstry was unaware at the time that she was being photographed. "After getting hit with the hose, that was the last thing on my mind. Dr. King



Picture E

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Picture F

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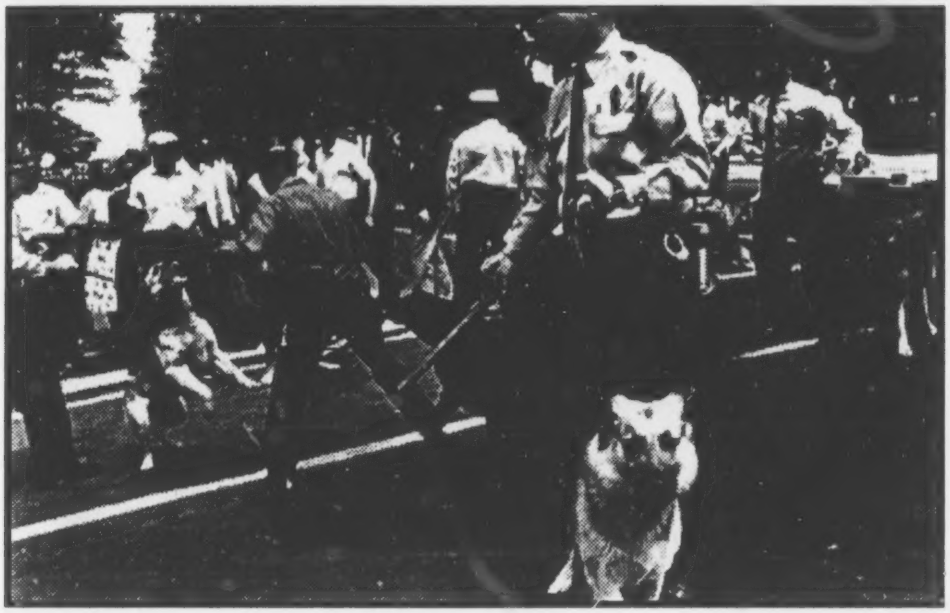
had had motivational meetings with us. He had never mentioned the water hose but said there might be dogs and they might even spit on you."[54] she said in a 1998 interview.

When she saw her picture in *Life* two weeks after the demonstrations, McKinstry had no special feeling about seeing herself in a national magazine, saying that she was still fearful and angry from the experience. However, a teenager at the time, she did remember being displeased at seeing her hair in disarray. Later, she would become appreciative of the sensitivity in Moore's graphic photographs. Before the Birmingham unrest, "the black community had lost any trust that there could be a fair portrayal by the photographers. We were always portrayed in a negative light."[55]

The protests continued for five days as King urged the demonstrators, many of them children, to return to the park. Some of the scores of angry onlookers were not schooled in the preacher's philosophy of passive resistance: Moore was struck in the ankle by a large chunk of concrete. Despite searing pain and an injury to his tendons, he continued to work for the next three days after treatment by a black doctor. "He did that story half-crippled,"[56] said Durham.

When the demonstrations did not abate, Connor ordered police dogs into the crowd and urged the officers to allow whites to view the demonstrations. "I want them to see the dogs work,"[57] he said. Along with the fire hose images, the pictures of dogs snarling and ripping at the pants of protesters would be among the most dramatic of Moore's career. (see picture G) Despite knowing that he was making meaningful photographs, Moore felt revulsion. "Attack dogs--that was repulsive,"[58] he said.

As the demonstrations spread, Moore and Durham disobeyed a police order not to go outside the park and were arrested as they attempted to document a woman being knocked down by the water from the hoses. Locked up in a cell for four hours with Durham and about a dozen menacing white men, Moore, known as a fearless photographer, faced one of



Picture G

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the most frightening experiences of his career. "We could have been beaten very badly if they would have known we were from *Life*."[59] Another reporter from the magazine bailed them out. Facing the possibility of a six-month jail term in an unsympathetic city, *Life's* lawyers advised Moore and Durham to leave town immediately and fly to New York. The charges were later dropped but for a year, Moore was a fugitive from justice in his own state, having to sneak home once to see his children in Dothan.

At *Life*, Moore was given the rare opportunity to supervise the eleven-page layout, and the magazine's editors decided to give him his first byline. His photos inspired seven letters which were published in the June 7 issue--three critical and four sympathetic to the civil rights cause. Francis Pharr Jones, of Austin, Texas, wrote, "We assume the guilt of the white supremacist when we allow this persecution. . . . I shall never forget those tragic faces." Grady Franklin, of Crawfordsville, Indiana, wrote, "Charles Moore's photographs on the racial troubles in Birmingham were superb and bone-chilling--surely a candidate for the Pulitzer Prize in news photography."[60]

The dog attack and fire hose pictures have been among the best-selling of all time at Black Star, reprinted time and again in books and magazines. Picture editor Yukiko Launois recalled that there were many photographers working in the South at the time, but "I remember Charles' photos, particularly of Birmingham, as the most memorable and distinguished." Several others also had photographed the violent confrontation between police dogs and protesters. "Somehow, Charles' image was better. Only Charles' became a classic. From the beginning, Charles Moore was identified with that image."[61]

Politicians noticed as well. John F. Kennedy said that the situation in Birmingham had sickened him and mentioned the riots there in a speech the next month in which he asked Congress to initiate civil rights legislation.[62] Militant black leader Malcolm X mentioned the dog attacks in a speech that he gave in Africa.[63] Senator Jacob Javits of New York later credited Moore's Birmingham photographs with helping to quicken passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."[64] Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. later said that his police dog photographs transformed the national mood and made the legislation not just necessary, but possible."[65] A year after Moore's classic photos were first published in *Life*, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Even artist Andy Warhol noticed Moore's best-known photo of a snarling dog reared up on its hind legs while another bit the buttocks of a protester. One morning in 1964, Chapnick and his wife, Jeanette, were eating breakfast when the Black Star chief noticed a *Time* magazine article about Warhol's latest work. Chapnick immediately recognized that one of the featured paintings, *Red Race Riot*, was a slightly altered silkscreen of Moore's photograph. "Howard has eagle eyes. He might not remember what he had for breakfast but never forgets a picture," [66] said his wife.

The painting was a clear copyright violation without credit to either Moore or the agency. Chapnick insisted that Moore go personally to Warhol's studio to confront him. Not comfortable with negotiating with the flamboyant artist and his assistant, Moore settled for two flower prints and Warhol's promise that he would be credited whenever the painting was reproduced. Later it was found that the flower series had itself been appropriated from a photograph in a Burpee seed catalog."[67] In the years to come, Warhol failed to follow through on his promise of crediting the photograph, and both Black Star and Moore sold their flower prints soon after obtaining them. The Warhol watercolor was not considered an appropriate match for the famous news photos adorning the walls at Black Star. "It had no place hanging with the photography. We sold it and had a lot of trouble getting rid of it. I think we got $250 for it,"[68] said Jeanette Chapnick.

**Staying safe:** *"You have to know when to duck and when to shoot."*

Moore and Durham traveled together frequently through the South covering the dangerous skirmishes that defined the black struggle for equality. When they first met in a Tennessee airport to cover the 1963 Freedom March, *Life's* editors had thought it wise to team a southerner with a northerner. Moore's Alabama drawl blended-in but when he heard

Durham's Yankee accent, the reporter recalled Moore's first words to him. "'At least you look like a redneck. But when we're together, don't say anything.' That's a funny thing to say to a reporter, but it was definitely good advice. It was best the rednecks didn't know who you were in those years.'"[69] Durham said.

The two quickly became friends and looked out for each other during the many urban battles they covered. In order not to miss crucial pictures during fast-breaking riots, a system was worked out where Moore would run backwards at full speed as he photographed, led by the collar through the crowd by Durham.

Chapnick told Moore that he could not believe that in Birmingham, the photographer's longest telephoto lens was a modest 100 millimeters. Often, the reporter would help out by carrying a lens or even Moore's camera bag during tense events. In June 1963, in Jackson, Mississippi, a riot broke out as the two covered the funeral of Medgar Evers, the first black civil rights leader to be assassinated.[70] Durham remembers the event as the only time that the usually kind and soft-spoken Moore ever spoke harshly to him.

> It was in the heat of action. He turned and said to me, 'Give me the lens!' 'What do you mean, 'give me the lens?' I replied. He said, 'I gave it to you.' I said, 'No, you did not.' We went back down the street and saw a red-haired kid standing there holding the lens. Charles asked him, 'How did you get the lens?' This kid turned and said to Charles, 'You told me, Here. Hold this.' All the time Charles thought it was me.

In June 1964, Moore and Durham were assigned to cover the disappearance of three white Northern college students who came to the South to help register black voters. After being jailed in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the three vanished shortly after their release. Later they were found murdered, and the *Life* team found themselves working in their most hostile environment yet.

"All the journalists will tell you that Philadelphia, Mississippi, was the most frightening place of all,"[71] Moore said. Because they had rented a car and taken a hotel room, word spread quickly among townspeople that outsider reporters were there to cover the murders. As Moore photographed the search for the bodies, a local man tried to knock a camera out of his hand. "As we were driving the back roads, our bumper got bumped." For protection, "in the motel, we put a chair in front of the door."[72]

The local sheriff, Charles Rainey, told Moore and Durham to get out of town. "You take my goddamn picture, you'll go to jail or worse,"[73] he told Moore. Still, the two persisted and remained in town when Rainey and Deputy Cecil Price were brought to court in connection with the murders.

"Sheriff Lawrence Rainey was a meanie. That guy was scary. I believe they were out there that night in the woods. I don't know if he [Rainey] pulled the trigger. Imagine the horrible things they did,"[74] Moore said. Price and six others, most of them members of the Ku Klux Klan, were later found guilty of conspiracy in depriving the victims of their civil rights. Rainey was acquitted of the charges.[75]

Despite being threatened on countless occasions, Moore was never beaten but once after a sit-in in Jacksonville, Florida, he was rescued by a passing television reporter as an angry mob of black teenagers chased him. In eight years of covering the movement, he found it ironic "that it was blacks who attacked us."[76] After a bomb threat had been called in, other journalists had evacuated the scene. Moore and Durham were the only ones left as the situation worsened. "They were angry with the police. They were high school kids throwing stones. They turned over our rental car and burned it. We were running away. My 100 millimeter lens was shattered. It was covering my face,"[77] Moore remembers.

Durham was not as lucky as the youths caught and beat him; the magazine ran a two-page article explaining what it was like to be beaten by a mob with a picture of the bandaged reporter in the hospital. He said later that if he had not found himself separated from Moore as the two ran for safety, he probably would have avoided injury.[78] "Good photojournalists are lucky. Charles had the luck," Durham said.[79] Moore described himself as being like one of the careful photographers who lives through wars." He credits veteran combat photographer Horst Faas with the philosophy that helped him escape injury while covering civil rights: "You have to know when to duck and when to shoot. Or you'll die."[80]

### Missed opportunities: *"You just couldn't let it bother you."*

Moore and Durham were sent on many assignments that never made the magazine. According to Moore, during the 1960s *Life* covered five stories every single week around the world for every one that got in the magazine.[51] Constantly on the road, he often would not know if his pictures had been published until picking up the magazine on the newsstand. Durham said that he knew that *Life* was not interested in an abundance of text but he took pleasure in photographers such as Moore getting their stories in.[52]

When their work was ignored, the two took consolation in knowing that they were witness to what they believed was an important chain of events. Not getting published "happened so often you just couldn't let it bother you. It was the main drawback. If it was *The Bay of Pigs* you could accept it. But often it would be a story of less import,"[53] that would bump civil rights coverage out of the magazine, Durham said.

On August 28, 1963, between 200,000 and 500,000 people gathered for the largest political demonstration in U.S. history to hear Martin Luther King, Charlton Heston, Sammy Davis, Jr., Sidney Poitier and others argue for equal rights.[54] *Life's* editors thought there might be trouble. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover had lobbied to try to have the Kennedy administration scuttle the march, believing that King was a communist. However, Kennedy was determined that his Civil Rights Bill could only be helped by such a large demonstration of both black and white supporters.[55]

"They always liked to put me out where there might be some trouble," Moore said. He was assigned to shoot the crowd in the reflecting pool area near the Washington Monument. But the rally turned out to be a peaceful one as King delivered his epic "I Have A Dream" speech. Although none of Moore's photos were published, the official memento of the march was a portfolio of five red, white and blue collages of *Life* magazine photographs that included the dog and fire hose images from Birmingham. Forty thousand were sold to the assembled crowd for one dollar each.[56]

**Selma:** *Atrocities on a 'Bloody Sunday'*

Moore's first *Life* cover was of the March 7, 1965, face-off between Alabama state troopers and a mass of marchers demonstrating for voting rights. King had gone to Selma to direct a registration drive in a county where only three percent of blacks had registered to vote, so great was the intimidation there.[87] Governor George Wallace said that he would not tolerate such a march and had about 100 state troopers ready to block the Edmund Pettus Bridge.[88]

Moore and dozens of other newsmen were witnesses as the troopers warned the group that it had two minutes to retreat back to the local Episcopal church. But only a minute later, the guardsmen were told to attack.[89] Moore's photographs depicted the savagery as troopers, some wearing gas masks, battered the demonstrators to the ground with billy clubs. More than sixty marchers were badly injured. One suffered a fractured skull. The incident became known as "Bloody Sunday."

*ABC* interrupted its broadcast of the holocaust film, *Judgment in Nuremberg*, to report live on the beatings. In Congress, more than fifty speeches were delivered deploring the brutality.[90] *Life's* coverage reflected the outrage of the nation-at-large. Besides the cover, the March 19 issue displayed several pages dominated by Moore's work, including full-page portraits of troopers and the injured.[91]

On April 2, it published five letters that were overwhelmingly critical of the troopers' violence. Mrs. M. M. Warsaw, of Braintree, Massachusetts, wrote of one of Moore's photos, "I wonder if the Selma policeman pictured on page 37 of your current issue would have the same defiant attitude and belligerence if he was brought face to face with the Negro Marines bravely going ashore at Da Nang, South Vietnam?" Julie G. Saunders of South Hadley, Massachusetts, wrote, "The whole tragedy greatly upset me, but not until reading your article have I cried about it. After reading your article I see that it is necessary that I become physically involved. . . . Even though I am safe and secure in this Northern school, . . . I am not free until they are."

After many years on the bloody front lines of the civil rights movement, Moore had seen enough. "I had been involved in so much ugliness and I realized that I needed to do something else."[92] Turning his attention toward other types of assignments after the brutal Selma beatings, in years to come he would photograph travel stories, do corporate portraiture, and occasionally return to doing hard news for a variety of publications. After Moore became determined to get away from covering violence, *Life's* editors later convinced him to cover the Vietnam war for two months including a photography essay for the magazine on B-52 air raids.[93]

Despite covering most of the major civil rights stories of the era, Moore missed the biggest one of all. When King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968, he was in Palo Alto, California doing a sex education assignment for the *Saturday Evening Post*. "We had on the radio and heard the flash. I just pulled the car over to the side, listened to the news and cried. After all I'd done, I felt bad I couldn't be there on that day in Memphis in 1968. I knew him and he knew me."[94]

## *Epilogue*

**Howard Chapnick** passed away shortly after his 1994 book, *Truth Needs No Ally*, was published. Of Moore's work he wrote, "The lesson here for aspiring photojournalists is that one has to recognize great turning points in social history, to seize the opportunity to bear witness to them, and to remember that what is in your backyard may be the stepping stone to your success."[95] His wife, **Jeanette Chapnick**, was Black Star's bookkeeper for several decades and continues Chapnick's work on behalf of documentary photography as a trustee of the W. Eugene Smith grant program and the Howard Chapnick Grant for the advancement of photojournalism.

**Carolyn McKinstry** met Charles Moore more than two decades after he took his famous photo depicting her getting sprayed by a fireman's hose in Birmingham, when both appeared on a television special about the events there. McKinstry also has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show and played herself in a recent Spike Lee film about four of her friends who were killed in a church bombing just months after the Birmingham riots. She frequently lectures at schools about the civil rights movement and works as an informational technology trainer for Bell South. Of Birmingham, where she still lives, McKinstry says, "It's become a really nice place to live."[96]

**Michael Durham** had the opportunity to hire Charles Moore for several freelance assignments when he later became editor of a magazine published by *American Heritage*. The two also collaborated on other topics for Life besides civil rights coverage. He wrote the text for Moore's 1991 book, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*. While doing the editing for the book, Durham says, "It was amazing to go back through all those old contact sheets. It was like reliving things." Now doing freelance writing and living in Delancey, New York, he remembers the heady days of covering civil rights. "Every once in awhile I think it would be great to rush off to the airport."[97]

**Charles Moore** is a freelance photographer based in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. He is a frequent lecturer about the civil rights era at universities and workshops. In 1965, after vowing to get away from the violence, Moore had one other *Life* cover about the staging of the musical, Hello Dolly, for troops in Vietnam. He has preferred to continue freelancing throughout his career rather than seek to join the staff of *Life* full time. Moore continues to be represented by Black Star and has had more than 100 covers for a variety of magazines including the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Newsweek*. In 1989, Howard Chapnick decided to enter Moore's work in the first annual Kodak Crystal Eagle Award for Impact in Photojournalism, regarded as one of the most prestigious honors in the industry. Moore was named the winner and the resulting publicity sparked renewed interest in his landmark work from the civil rights movement. In the forward to Moore's 1991 book, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, Andrew Young, the civil rights leader and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, wrote, "The photographs of Charles Moore presented in this brilliant chronicle offer more than simple, visual accounts of the civil rights years. . . . For those of us who remember the pictured events from personal experience, this book is a means by which to sharpen memories, to relive and revisit some of the most meaningful, terrifying and rewarding moments of our lives."[98]

## Notes

[1] Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 154.

[2] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore* (New York: Stewart, Tabouri and Chang, 1991), 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, 35.

[4] *In 1955, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that desegregation would be carried out under federal supervision. The movement's origins are often credited to the Supreme Court ruling and the murder later that year of Chicago teenager, Emmett Till in Mississippi.* From chronology in: Stanford Wexler, *The Civil Rights Movement, An Eyewitness History*, (New York: Facts on File Books, 1993), 61.

[5] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 13.

[6] *Ibid.*, 96.

[7] "They Fight A Fire That Won't Go Out," *Life*, May 17, 1963, 26-36. *Italic added for emphasis.*

[8] *Ibid.*, 36.

[9] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[10] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 30, and *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 8.

[11] *Tuscumbia was also the birthplace of Helen Keller.*

[12] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 19.

[13] *Ibid.*, 20.

[14] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 32.

[17] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 12.

[18] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[21] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 48.

[22] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 49.

[25] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[26] "In the U.S., Mostly Quiet," *Life*, September 15, 1958, 30.

[27] *Life*, September 15, 1958, 2.

[28] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[29] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[30] Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally*, 154.

[31] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[32] Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally*, 155.

[33] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 26.

[34] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[35] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 56.

[36] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[37] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 62.

[38] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 17.

[42] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[43] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 18.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] "With The Besieged Marshals As The Wild Mob Attacks," *Life*, October 12, 1962, 37. *Italic added for emphasis.*

[48] *Life*, November 2, 1958, 21.

[49] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 72.
[50] *Ibid.*, 26.

[51] Martin Luther King in *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 264, in Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 93.

[52] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 27.

[53] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[54] Telephone interview, Carolyn McKinstry, May 25, 1998.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Telephone interview, Michael Durham, May 23, 1998.

[57] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 102.

[58] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] *Life*, June 7, 1963, 21.

[61] Telephone interview, Yukiko Launois, May 25, 1998.

[62] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 10, 98.

[63] *Ibid*, 96.

[64] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 32.

[65] *Ibid*, 32.

[66] Telephone interview, Jeanette Chapnick, May 21, 1998.

[67] Telephone interview, Dave Stueber, May 25, 1998. *Stueber is a photographer and art historian who has interviewed Moore and gave a presentation at Tulane University about the incident.*

[68] Telephone interview, Jeanette Chapnick, May 21, 1998.

[69] Telephone interview, Michael Durham, May 23, 1998.

[70] *Evers was shot in front of his home. His killer, Byron de la Beckwith, a white supremacist, would not be brought to justice for thirty years when he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1994.*

[71] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 7, 1998.

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 140.

[76] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 5, 1998.

[77] *Ibid.*

[78] Telephone interview, Michael Durham, May 23, 1998.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 6, 1998.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] Telephone interview, Michael Durham, May 23, 1998

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 118.

[85] *Ibid*, 117.

[86] Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement, A Photographic History, 1954-68*, 16.

[87] Michael Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 34.

[88] Stanford Wexler, *The Civil Rights Movement, An Eyewitness History*, (New York: Facts on File Books, 1993), 219.

[89] *Ibid.*

[90] *Ibid*, 220.

[91] "Selma: Beatings Start The Savage Season," *Life*, March 19, 1965.

[92] *Michael* Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 33.

[93] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, June 18, 1998, and *Michael* Durham, *Powerful Days, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*, 35-36.

[94] Telephone interview, Charles Moore, May 7, 1998.

[95] Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally*, 155.

[96] Telephone interview, Carolyn McKinstry, May 25, 1998.

[97] Telephone interview, Michael Durham, May 23, 1998.

[98] *Powerful Days*, The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore, 10.

Charles Moore is surrounded by empty teargas canisters the morning after rioting subsided at the University of Mississippi, September 1962.

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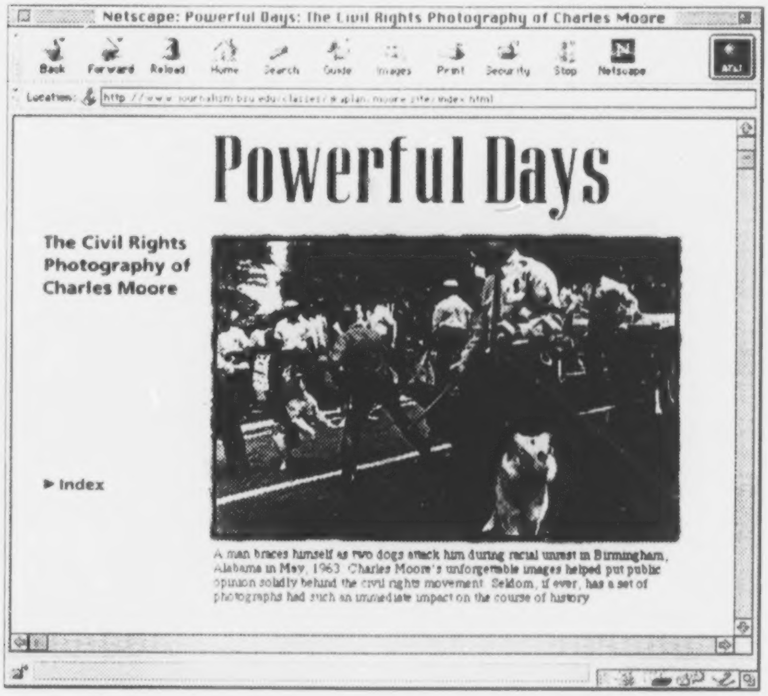
*To view the photographs discussed in this paper, please visit:*

**www.civilrightsphotos.com**



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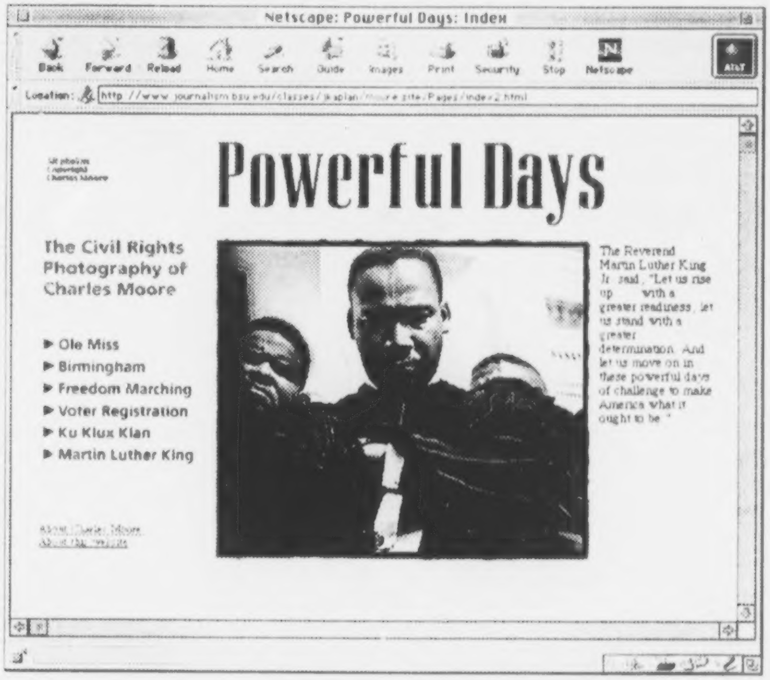
Powerful Days

The Civil Rights
Photography of
Charles Moore

► Index

A man braces himself as two dogs attack him during racial unrest in Birmingham, Alabama in May, 1963. Charles Moore's unforgettable images helped put public opinion solidly behind the civil rights movement. Seldom, if ever, has a set of photographs had such an immediate impact on the course of history



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Powerful Days

The Civil Rights
Photography of
Charles Moore

- ► Ole Miss
- ► Birmingham
- ► Freedom Marching
- ► Voter Registration
- ► Ku Klux Klan
- ► Martin Luther King

About Charles Moore
About this website

The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Let us rise up with a greater readiness, let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days of challenge to make America what it ought to be."

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# Out of Their Hands: Framing and its Impact on Newsmagazine Coverage of Indians and Indian Activism, 1968-79

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# ABSTRACT

This content analysis identified and described a media frame used by *Time*, *Newsweek* and *US News & World Report* to marginalize Indians and Indian activists from 1968-79. All seventy-eight stories that appeared during this period were analyzed. Activist events set a large portion of the magazines' agenda. Indians were framed as a violent, militant, and divided out-group. Based on this deviant and illegitimate frame – and on limited survey data – this study concluded that this coverage had a negative impact on public opinion.

# Out of Their Hands

## *Framing and its Impact on Newsmagazine Coverage of Indians and Indian Activism, 1968-79*

### INTRODUCTION

For society's out-groups – minorities, activists, and anyone else who stands outside the mainstream – the question of how they are portrayed by the media has become paramount. Society has become dependent upon the media to make sense of the variety of events and situations that occur in the world every day. The framework in which these events and situations are presented impacts the way society perceives them.[1] For an out-group, this presentation has the power to "make or break" its cause. Is the group framed as legitimate? Is it presented as having any authority? Is it framed as deviant? Out-groups and people in general "have no voice in what the media make of what they say or do, or in the context within which the media frame their activity."[2] Society's understanding of the out-group is out of their hands – and yet the group is entirely dependent upon the media to tell its story. To make it *matter*. Where the out-group stands at the end of the day is a function of the frame in which it is placed by the media. The sentiments of the out-group addressed in the present research toward this dominant media framework were summed up by Russell Means, leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM), in 1974: "They're laughing [the occupation of Wounded Knee, S.D.] off in *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek*, and the editors in New York and what have you. They're treating this as a silly matter, just as they've treated Indian people throughout history. We're tired of being treated that way."[3]

Organized Indian[4] activism can be traced to 1968 – during an era in which several social movements were gathering steam. In that year, a disgruntled group of Indian Americans from various tribes founded AIM in an effort to effect "meaningful change for the Indian community."[5] The group put pressure on the government bureaucracy to ensure greater Indian representation in decision-making, and they helped Indian people organize themselves for self-protection against police and judicial abuse. AIM also incorporated what it saw as the greatest strengths of the Indian people – their spiritual heritage and their relation to the land – into its efforts to assist in the plight of the Indian people. In the statement of its principles and philosophies, AIM recognized that:

> Media is for the attraction and attention of an issue.... Media is how Indian people get recognized for their plight. AIM wants media attention because it makes people aware, support and/or oppose our position and gives the people the right to make decisions for themselves.... All the materials that people read about AIM is written by non-Indians and because AIM is not supportive of the so called "American Way," we are criticized meticulously for our right to be who we are... but AIM looks for the attention to let the American and international communities be aware and make decisions for themselves.[6]

Throughout the next decade, Indians across the country were able to draw national media attention with a series of protests and events. Events that drew significant, national media coverage included: the 1969 to 1971 occupation of Alcatraz Island (this was not an AIM organized event, but it attracted AIM participants); the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties, a march on Washington, D.C., that culminated in the occupation of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) headquarters; the Second Battle of Wounded Knee in 1973, and in 1978 The Longest Walk, a follow-up march on Washington. To determine how this particular out-group was portrayed – as well as to effectively address Means' criticism of the media – one must develop a deeper understanding of how the media have portrayed

Indians and Indian activism. To achieve this understanding, the present study identified and described the frame used by the media in coverage of Indians and Indian activism. It also considered the agenda-setting function of activist events on this coverage as well as the potential impact of this frame on public opinion.

### MEDIA FRAMING

Frame analysis has a solid foundation in the social sciences. In his seminal work, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, sociologist Erving Goffman (1974) isolated "some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events."[7] Some frames attract attention to events while others foster "disattention" – a lack of attention paid to the event. Goffman demonstrated that these primary frameworks allow the individual to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences."[8] In short, individuals are able to determine and define what is going on around them through the use of frames. Communication researchers have adopted and contributed to the concept of framing by addressing how frames are used to shape the information that appears in the mass media as well as the ways in which these frames affect how audiences perceive what they read and see.

The existence and importance of the media frame was demonstrated by Todd Gitlin in *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* and has been supported by numerous communication researchers. Media framing is defined by the "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters."[9] What reporters and editors choose to say, where they say it, and how they say it impact a story's frame. Gitlin explained: "media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual."[10] Without them, he argued, journalists would not be able to quickly process information or coherently present it to their readers. Framing devices impact: what portions of a story are told, what part of a story is given prominence (as well as the prominence received by the story as a whole), which sources are given dominance, the extent to which the group covered is marginalized (portrayed as legitimate and/or deviant), and what words (labels, stereotypes) are used to describe the players. Media content – right down to adjective choice – is influenced by the journalist's frame.[11] Whether purposeful or not, the text is no longer a description of the "way things happened," but rather demonstrates the way the story fits into a frame.

Gitlin concluded that these frames often serve to marginalize groups and opinions that stand outside the mainstream. In *The Whole World is Watching*, Gitlin illustrated how internal problems and deviancy were used to discredit one such out-group – Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) – in the eyes of the mass media audience. He effectively demonstrated that "the forms of coverage accrete into systematic framing, and this framing, much amplified, helps determine the movement's fate."[12] Several recent studies, which focus on coverage of such varied topics as the women's movement, African Americans, and socialism, corroborate Gitlin's conclusion that media frames render out-groups illegitimate.[13] For example, in their study of the women's movement Laura Ashley and Beth Olson illustrated the way in which the United States' print media framed the movement by "reporting aspects of women's appearance ... and emphasizing dissention within the movement."[14] The researchers concluded that through the use of these framing techniques and others – such as story prominence and the portrayal of deviancy – the print media delegitimized feminists.

Robert Entman furthered the efficacy of frame analysis by pointing out that "frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience."[15] This salience renders some aspects of the story more noticeable and memorable for the audience. He adds stereotypes – culturally-symbolic descriptions – to the list of framing techniques and as another type of salient information.

Stereotypes tend to perpetuate an invalid set of assumed characteristics/ generalizations of out-group members. They can inform the audience of a group's socioeconomic status as well as personality traits. "According to this perspective, people generally *assume* in-groups have more favorable characteristics… than do out-groups."[16] By using stereotypical descriptors as a framing device, the media reinforce these invalid generalizations. This becomes even more problematic in the case of out-groups because media portrayals often serve as the audience member's only contact with that group. This lack of familiarity "breeds a tendency to be highly influenced by data relevant to evaluation."[17] The traits seen in the media are the only traits used to evaluate the group.

In their work on political discourse, Gamson and Modigliani also found that framing included this system of symbolic devices.[18] The words and where they appear in the story contribute to the overall frame. These advances in the conception of frame analysis clarify and add that location and length of the story, sources used, topic of the story (event or theme driven) and rhetorical devises (descriptions, exemplars, and stereotypes) all contribute to the overall frame of the story.[19] By considering the salience of these framing techniques, the researcher can better analyze story content. Entman argues that "the major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames."[20] The research outlined above established the relevance of frame analysis to mass media research. What's more, it pointed to the particular significance of framing to the study of the media's portrayal of out-groups. Informed by this literature, the present study examined how these framing techniques – prominence, dominance, legitimacy, deviance, and stereotypes – were used by the newsmagazines in their coverage of Indians from 1968 through 1979.

## FRAMING AND THE AGENDA

To further address how this particular out-group was portrayed by the media, the present study also considered what type of stories about Indians and Indian activism were part of the media's agenda at what time. Simply, what topics did the media choose to cover when and to what detail (length)? "Twenty-five years of agenda-setting research has produced a wealth of evidence about the influence of the news media on which issues are on the public agenda. The pattern of coverage and play of issues on the news agenda significantly influences the prominence of issues on the public agenda."[21] Certain issues are given priority by the media while others fall by the wayside. By considering the media agenda, the present research addressed not only how activism influenced coverage of American Indians but also what the impact of that agenda was on public opinion and the public agenda. In addition, this research provides a first step toward understanding the impact of that media agenda on public opinion and on the public agenda.

A consideration of agenda setting is essential to the present study because of its link to media framing. "How an issue is framed is an important determinant of issue salience."[22] Agenda setting and framing are woven together in that if a story is framed as part of the mainstream or as a mainstream issue then the agenda-setting effect is stronger. The issue is more likely to be placed on the public agenda. When addressing frame analysis in conjunction with agenda setting, the importance of the frame becomes even more clear. Through the use of framing techniques, journalists can add or eliminate a story from the public agenda. Stories that fall outside the mainstream – discuss out-groups in illegitimate or deviant terms – will not make it onto the public agenda. The connection of media coverage to public opinion is essential because it provides for the importance of identifying and describing the way in which a topic has been framed. The impact of coverage on public opinion and agendas may be minimal or negative depending on the frame in which it was placed.

Public opinion and agendas have also been shown to be influenced by the reporting of conflict. The extent to which the media includes coverage of conflict in its agenda of a certain issue will also impact what people know and how they feel about that issue. Conflict has been shown to increase the amount of knowledge individuals have on a given subject as well as to stimulate the opinion formation process. However, this can have negative connotations for an out-group. "Dominant groups seeking to ward off challenges will typically downplay the elements of controversy, thereby withdrawing legitimacy from alternate views."[23] In short, the way an issue is framed and the presence of conflict can influence public opinion. Considering this relationship between framing and agenda setting, the present study explored the newsmagazines' agenda of Indian stories over time taking into account the affect of Indian activism on that agenda.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Grounded in the theories of framing and agenda setting outlined above, this research answered the following research questions: 1.) How were American Indians and events of Indian Activism *framed* by the newsmagazines from 1968 to 1979? 2.) What *agenda-setting* impact did activist events have on coverage of Indians overall during this time period? 3.) What was the *potential* impact of this agenda on public opinion and on the public agenda?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

American Indians have been the subject of limited communications research. The first study to focus on this out-group, "The Role of the Press in an Indian Massacre, 1871," by William B. Blankenburg, appeared in *Journalism Quarterly* in 1968. It examined the portrayal of Indians in the popular press in the late 1800s. The author illustrated how reporters in western as well as in eastern states presented negative pictures of Indians to their readers. Blankenburg argued that the popular press worked to encourage and then to justify the slaughter of more than 100 Indians – only eight of whom were men – at Camp Grant in Arizona.[24] His content analysis provided insight into the portrayal of Indians in the popular press, which points to questions concerning the portrayal of these peoples in more recent decades.

In 1979, a chapter from Sharon Murphy's book, *Let My People Know*, appeared in *Journalism History* entitled "American Indians and the Media: Neglect and Stereotype." This essay provided a qualitative analysis of Americans Indians in the mass media through 1979. Murphy presented a picture of Indian people as portrayed by the mass media and concluded "the story that unfolds in such exploration is one of Indians' ongoing struggle to communicate – a struggle that has reached life and death proportions throughout more than 150 years."[25] The remainder of Murphy's book concerned itself with media that was owned, operated, written, and published by Indians rather than the presentation of these Americans in the mainstream media.[26] However, the image she provided of "neglect and stereotype" pointed to the need for additional research.

In the 1990s, communication researchers have directed increased attention at the topic of American Indians in the media. In 1996, Mary Ann Weston's book, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press*, provided a sweeping overview of coverage of Indians and Indian activism. Her analysis was largely qualitative and addressed events of activism as well as general coverage of Indian people. The book provided an important look at this coverage in the twentieth century. To illustrate, in her analysis of the Alcatraz occupation, she described the event as: "'an experiment in self-determination' and an exercise in public relations, that is, of 'educating the general public to the Indian condition [by] breaking . . . into the public news media.'"[27] While Weston mentioned a variety of publications, she did not provide a complete quantitative account of the coverage the Alcatraz occupation received. Her analysis concluded that the coverage "certainly . . . made Native Americans visible"[28] and that the stories "were descriptive and did not make sweeping judgements."[29] She did concede that the "images" presented by the media were not entirely positive, but stopped short of discussing the impact of framing on this "image." This analysis is typical of Weston's book and this researcher was left wondering how reporters framed this coverage of American Indians.

Three recent studies have provided additional historical analyses of media coverage of American Indians. Robert G. Hays provided a sampling of editorials that addressed the topic of Indians with his book, *A Race at Bay: New York Times Editorials on "The Indian Problem," 1860-1900*. While he did not provide a detailed analysis of this coverage, his book disclosed what people knew about the "Indian problem" and when they knew it.[30] In another historical study, "Natives, Newspapers, and 'Fighting Bob:' Wisconsin Chippewa in the 'Unprogressive' Era," Patty Loew, explored newspaper coverage of the 1909 Senate hearings on the subject of reservation conditions in Wisconsin. She showed that Indian voices were completely absent from this coverage.[31] The article ended with the *speculation* that Indians are being ignored by today's media just as they were by the media in 1909. This speculation raises questions about the nature of this recent coverage. Finally, in his book, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity and the Press, 1820-90*, John W. Coward provided an in-depth look at the images and presentations of Indians in newspapers to illustrate how the media have perpetuated stereotypes and how these stereotypes impacted Indian identity. "This book investigates the creation, uses, and meanings of Native American identities as produced by the nineteenth-century press. Specifically, this work examines the ways that newspapers conceived of, explained, and made sense of Native Americans at particular historical moments."[32] Coward pointed to the fact that these images changed at different points in time. Again, this study illustrated the importance of understanding how Indians have been presented in more recent history.

In their very different, empirical study, Alexis Tan, Yuki Fujioka, and Nancy Lucht illustrated the real damage that can be done by the perpetuation of stereotypes by the media. The researchers tested the prevalence of stereotypes of Indians and their impact on the audience by using a self-administered questionnaire. It was found that TV portrayals had a limited negative effect on individuals who had no other contact with American

Indians.[33] For these individuals, the more negative stereotypes seen, the more negative the opinion of Indians. This cultivation study pointed to the importance of understanding what images have been presented by the media and of defining how stories have been framed. The question becomes: what stereotypes have been perpetuated?

In addition to these communication studies, a variety of historical and first person accounts have been written about Indian activism.[34] Troy R. Johnson has offered two histories that provided insight into the roots of Indian activism. His books, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island* and *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk*, contained interpretations of the impact of Indian activism on Indian peoples as well as on public opinion regarding these peoples. His analyses included a limited discussion of the media coverage of this activism and the role of the press in activist events. Similarly, Paul Chaat Smith provided some discussion of the role of the press in Indian activist events in his book, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. These histories illustrated the importance of the media in Indian activism. In so doing, they pointed to the need to address this media coverage quantitatively while taking into account the impact of media frames.

Adam Fortunate Eagle wrote a first-person account of the Alcatraz event entitled *Alcatraz! Alcatraz!*, which was published in 1992. In his book, Fortunate Eagle briefly addressed the role of the media in the event: "Like any populist cause, the Alcatraz occupation relied on the media from the very beginning.... Our plans always included the media and they soon become [sic] an integral part of the occupation."[35] He admitted that the event was meant to bring Indian affairs to the "bigger stage via the media."[36] As the event wore on, support from the press dissipated and Indian participants grew hostile toward the media. However, Fortunate Eagle maintained that the "news media was our greatest ally."[37] He did not address the amount or nature of the media coverage. Another first-person account that merits mention is the essay "Alcatraz Recollections" by Tim Findley, a journalist who covered the Alcatraz occupation for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. His account makes the role of the media frame abundantly clear. Findley discussed the occupation's leaders as "ready-made for the media," the importance of the early publicity in the successful take-over of the island, and his personal impact on the event. Early on, his coverage was primarily positive. As the event wore on, his portrayals became more negative (he drew an analogy between the Alcatraz occupants and the children in *Lord of the Flies*). "What I had written had helped to create it, and what I had chosen not to write had helped to perpetuate it."[38] Because of the impact this one reporter was able to have on this particular event, his insights begged the question, how were this and other events of Indian activism addressed by the national news media?

## METHODS

Content analysis was used to measure framing techniques to answer the question: 1.) How were American Indians and events of Indian Activism *framed* by the newsmagazines from 1968 to 1979? In addition, the content analysis measured the newsmagazines' agenda regarding this topic to answer the question 2.) What *agenda-setting* impact did events of Indian Activism have on coverage of Indians overall during this time period? Framing and agenda setting were taken together to answer the question 3.) What was the *potential* impact of this agenda on public opinion and on the public agenda?

## SAMPLE

The universe of stories for the study included **all** coverage of Indians that appeared from 1968 to 1979 in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*. This universe included seventy-eight stories. The sample included **all** seventy-eight stories listed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* under the heading "Indians" from 1968 to 1979. The time period included in the study was chosen because of its significance to Indian activism. The starting point of 1968 coincides with the formation of AIM. Throughout the next decade, several organized, Indian activist events ensued. The last major event, the Longest Walk, took place in 1978. In order to account for the agenda-setting effect of this event, the present study included stories that appeared through 1979. The newsmagazines studied in this content analysis were included because of their general news content and national audience. They were mainstream newsmagazines that enjoyed large audiences. Consequently, these newsmagazines represented what the average American read and saw about Indians during the time period in question.

## CODING CATEGORIES

To identify and describe the media frame, this study coded for several of the framing techniques discussed in the literature.[39] Prominence – the level of importance assigned to the story by the media – was operationalized by story placement, length, and the presence of artwork. Dominance – the point of view that received the most attention in the story – was operationalized by the number and type of sources used in each story. Legitimacy – the validity assigned to the subject of the story – was operationalized by mentions of appearance, of internal dissention, and (from a positive angle) of Indians' rights and treaties. Deviancy – falling outside the mainstream – was operationalized by mentions of violence and militancy Stereotyping – the use of culturally significant, often negative descriptors – was operationalized by the story's use of the following terms braves, red men, raiding party, warpath, warrior, and savage In addition, the date the story appeared and story topic were coded to measure for agenda setting Story topics were[40]

- *Activist Event* – a story covering any event/act of protest by Indians, whether against the U S Government or a Tribal Government
- *Culture* – coverage of Indian history, religion, the arts (dancing, weaving, etc ), tradition, language, or education Included reviews of books about or by Indians
- *Economic Activity, Indians* – stories covering Indian business ventures including the management and use of their resources
- *Government, Economics* – stories about U.S Government involvement in resource management and control as well as government subsidies, funding, and other money issues
- *Government, General* – coverage of government involvement in Indian affairs, legislation, and jurisdiction This also included political visits to reservations
- *Government, Land rights Litigation* – stories about lawsuits involving land ownership and reparations
- *Public Health and Welfare* – stories **primarily** covering civil rights, welfare, poverty, unemployment, housing, or basic living conditions
- *Other* – coverage of any topic that did not fit into the above categories

To assist the data analysis, these topic categories were collapsed from nine to three categories The categories tested against one another were "Activist Events," "Government Land Rights," and all other categories combined into an "Other Coverage" category In addition, the twelve years studied were collapsed into three, significant four-year periods Early Activism, 1968-71, Peak Activism, 1972-75, and Waning Activism, 1976-79 The statistical analysis included a series of t-tests to determine the statistical significance of the differences between means within each tested category; a $X^2$ analysis to determine if the distribution of story topics in the different time periods was significant, and a single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine any significance among sample means for the categories of story prominence, source type, stereotypical descriptors, and deviancy when tested against time period and story topic.

Reliability, based on percentage of agreement,[41] ranged from 79 percent for measures of deviance, 87 percent for legitimacy measures, and 88.5 percent for source information, and 91.5 percent for topic to 100 percent for date, title and presence of stereotypical descriptors. Overall, intercoder reliability for the study was 92 percent. Level of significance for the study was set at $p \leq .05$.

## RESULTS

Overall, the study found that the framing device of story prominence was used widely by the newsmagazines to marginalize this coverage. Similarly, the magazines assigned a dominant point of view to government sources. Indians and Indian activists were marginalized inside this frame. Framing devices that affect the perceived legitimacy of a group were often utilized by the magazines as were stereotypical descriptors. What's more, Indians and Indian activism were framed as deviant to some degree (see table 1). Finally, this study found activist events setting a large portion of the newsmagazines' agenda for coverage of Indians. Based on the media's framing of this coverage – as well as limited survey data – it is reasonable to conclude that its impact on public opinion was likely negative.

### PROMINENCE

Story prominence was found to be a key framing device for all topics and in all time periods.[42] Magazine coverage of Indian Americans lacked prominence. To begin, only 78 stories covering these peoples appeared during this twelve-year period. The mean page on which these stories began was 56 and average length was 14 paragraphs. A total of 74

(94.9%) of these stories were accompanied by artwork, however, this speaks more about the media than about the prominence of this coverage (the majority of articles in the magazines studied were accompanied by artwork, which is typical of this medium). The increased activism from 1972-75 increased the amount of coverage Indians received in this media, however, this did not significantly increase the prominence of these topics overall. Average position during this period was page 52 and average length of stories was 13.36 paragraphs. Stories about activist events were, on average, significantly longer and better positioned than other coverage during this period – average position for activist event coverage was page 39 and average length was 15.42 paragraphs. Much of this coverage was of the Second Battle of Wounded Knee. Many photographs of Indians brandishing weapons appeared in the newsmagazines during this period. Then, during the period from 1976-79, coverage of activist events was significantly less prominent than other coverage in terms of length, averaging only 5 paragraphs, while it remained in a significantly better position (see table 2). Perhaps some of the novelty had worn off. Or, perhaps, the magazines were tired of conflicts that seemed to have no resolutions.[43]

## DOMINANCE

Dominance was shared by government sources (31.4 percent) and non-activist Indian sources (40 percent). These "other" Indians were often quoted as being opposed to the methods and goals of Indian activists. During the period of waning activism from 1976-79, "other" Indian sources received a significant number of the attributions in the collapsed "other coverage" category. Many of these sources were quoted in stories covering the swell of Indian economic activity on reservations that occurred during this period. Indian people were reclaiming their resources and negotiating prices with the U.S.

Government (one tribe even met with OPEC to discuss oil-contract strategies). Indian activists were quoted significantly more often in stories about activist events from 1972-75. However, they received only 8.5 percent of the attributions overall (see table 2).

## LEGITIMACY, DEVIANCY & STEREOTYPES

Framing devices used to assign legitimacy to or to remove legitimacy from a group were used to some degree by all of the newsmagazines studied. These magazines used mentions of appearance in 13.9 percent of stories and mentions of internal dissention in 28.2 percent of stories. Indians' rights and treaties were mentioned often, in 39.7 percent of stories. An example of this discussion of Indian rights occurred during the period from 1976-79. In 1977, the efficacy of the 1790 Nonintercourse Act, which "provided that no Indian land should change hands without congressional approval,"[44] was mentioned in several stories regarding Indian land claims in Maine, New York, and South Carolina. In this way, the magazines made an effort to define the rights of Indian peoples. However, Indians were often framed as deviant, mentions of violence appeared in 55.1 percent of stories. **Every** story about Indian activism from 1972-75 included at least one mention of violence. The newsmagazines made mention of violence significantly more often in stories about activist events during this period (see table 3). Interestingly, 54 percent of stories in the "Other Topic" category included mentions of violence during this period – compared with only 27.78 percent from 1968-71 and 33.33 percent from 1976-79. It appears that increased activism lead to increased use of the frame of deviance in coverage of Indians overall. What's more, Indians were described stereotypically in 55.1 percent of all magazine stories. These framing devices perpetuated Indian stereotypes and placed events a deviant frame. The impact of this illegitimate, stereotypical portrayal of

American Indians during this time period was explained by Vine Deloria, Indian Activist, in this striking example.

> The way, Indian activists concluded, to affect the American public was to parade as warriors of old, and, at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in the winter of 1972, they provided the television-viewing public with a seventy-two-day Indian war. The relevant social issues of the revolt were buried by the spectacle of Indians on horseback racing around before the cameras... they served primarily to reinforce the worst suspicions of whites at the time when the ancient derogatory image could have been buried once and for all.[45]

## FRAMING AND THE AGENDA

The change in coverage between time periods and the difference in coverage within time periods were significant (see table 4).[46] As activism was taking root in the Indian community, activist events made up only 17.4 percent of coverage. During these years, twenty-three stories appeared. From 1972-75, coverage overall increased significantly to thirty-four stories. During this period more than half (55.9 percent) of this coverage was dedicated to activist events. Coverage dropped off again from 1976-79, to a total of twenty-two stories. Activist events received 4.5 percent of this coverage while land rights received 27.3 percent. Articles covering land rights increased during this period due to a number of lawsuits filed by Indians against the government for land, reparations, and resource rights. Many tribes won settlements for land that was illegally taken from them by the states more than a century earlier.

This pattern of coverage illustrates that Indian activism drove a large part of the media's agenda during this twelve-year period. When activist events occurred, they dramatically increased the amount coverage these peoples received overall. Thirty percent of all stories that appeared in these mainstream media from 1968-79 focused on activist events. As we shall see below, the framing of these stories likely had a significant impact on the agenda-setting function of this coverage.

## CONCLUSIONS

Results show that American Indians and Indian events were marginalized by a variety of framing devices used across newsmagazine coverage. Means' criticism of the media coverage received by his people was understandable based on this quantitative analysis. To begin, the limited amount of coverage was telling of the position of this out-group. Furthermore, when topics regarding Indian people did receive coverage, they were relegated to mediocre positioning at best. In regards to the dominant ideology, this group was positioned outside the mainstream and was illustrated as being of little real consequence. This is reiterated by the use of sources in the stories. A dominant point-of-view was given to the government – to the dominant ideology – not to the Indian peoples whom the stories were about. This was especially true in coverage of activist events. When considering the impact of devices used to frame legitimacy and deviance in this coverage, it is important to point out that coverage of activist events makes up almost one-third (30 percent) of the press received by Indians during the twelve-year period studied. The results of this frame analysis illustrated that coverage of these events was placed in a less legitimate, more deviant frame than other coverage. This coverage also "enjoyed" a significant increase in prominence and in the use of Indian activists as sources. The implication is that these players and their actions were framed as illegitimate and deviant in a **more** prominent position in the media. Deviance, dissention, and conflict were given salience in the coverage. With this frame identified and the "symbolic content of the media messages" described, "the question of effects can... be sensibly posed."[47]

This study described a media frame that would reasonably lead to "disattention" of the out-groups of Indians and Indian activists. Anecdotal evidence of the manifestation of this media frame appeared in a 1978 *Newsweek* article that pointed out: "One of the saddest little footnotes of the activist '60s was the fitful attempt of American Indians to work up a protest movement of their own. Divided, not communicating among themselves and ill-equipped by heritage and circumstance to play the activist game. ... the Indians seemed to be one group that had no chance."[48] In this frame, it would have been pointless for the reader to place the "sad," divided, unorganized, and ill-equipped American Indian on his/her agenda.

This frame provides an illustration of the way in which journalists can add or eliminate a story from the public's agenda through the use of framing techniques. Stories that fall outside the mainstream – that discuss out-groups in illegitimate or deviant terms – will not make it onto the public's agenda. Simply put, the frame has the power to "determine the movement's fate."[49] The frame applied to coverage of American Indians, which was clamped *extra* tightly onto the almost one-third of coverage that focused on activist events, practically ensured that the public would not place the issues addressed by Indian activists on its agenda. There is limited evidence to prove that this was, in fact, the case. A 1965 Harris poll found that 29.1 percent of voters polled often "felt badly because of the way the American Indian has been treated." In 1969, a repeat of this poll found that 41.8 percent of those polled felt this way. It would appear that at the beginning of the occupation of Alcatraz Island, more Americans were aware of or felt badly about the plight of the American Indian. However, opinion was not with the Indians for long. In 1971, the percentage of those answering "often" to this question dropped to 28 percent (unfortunately, this was the last year in which Harris asked this question). The event/coverage appears to have had a limited, immediate impact on public opinion about how this out-group had been treated; but the issues raised did not stay on the public agenda. The amount of coverage did not change significantly between 1969 and 1971. In fact, activist events received more coverage in 1971 than in 1969. However, in 1969 the activism was a novelty. By 1971, the public was already growing tired of it – it is probable that the media frame of deviance and illegitimacy had a hand in this opinion. Although causation cannot be implied, this limited survey data provides an interesting glimpse into the relationship between the framing of coverage and public opinion.

The connection between public opinion and conflict is also important to consider in the analysis of this coverage. By 1971 the occupation of Alcatraz had ended, but the conflict was not really resolved. Because unresolved conflict and the dominant ideology can remove legitimacy from a group and eliminate it from the agenda, this could also have had an impact on the loss of public support illustrated by the Harris poll. Considering the coverage that was to come, a loss of interest because of conflict would not bode well for Indian activism. Subsequent years brought more clashes between the government – the dominant ideology – and Indian activists. The media latched onto the 1972 Indian occupation of BIA Headquarters in Washington and the violence (destruction of property) that occurred there. Subsequent coverage of Indian activism in the *Times* made repeated references to the stealing of BIA files and the smashing of Indian artifacts. In 1973, coverage across all media spiked as activists occupied the hamlet of Wounded Knee. Conflict drove the coverage, but a resolution was no where in sight. As activism waned – it did not stop, but it was not seen as providing newsworthy "media events" – overall coverage dropped. The unresolved issues and conflicts seem to have led to a loss of interest in Indian activism and to its removal from the media's agenda. If the Harris polls are any indication, the public had likely lost interest as well (if they were already tired of the conflict in 1971, it must have seemed hopeless in 1973). From 1976-79, American Indians continued to fight, but in this era they did it in the courtroom. Many tribes sued the government for resource rights, land, and/or reparations during this period – and many won. The conflict shifted from militant to legal, but it was still conflict. And again, this conflict may well have continued to keep Indian activism and issues off the public's agenda.

The portrayal of Indian peoples and of AIM was not in their control. The fate of the movement, of their issues, was out of their hands. Journalists and other symbol handlers created the above framework through which Americans viewed Indians during this period. The frame described here illustrates that Indian people – particularly Indian activism – were marginalized. Based on research of similar out-groups, this should come as no surprise. The role of the press in determining the fate of a movement – how it will be perceived, if it will survive – is illustrated in this example.

Further research into public opinion throughout this period would be useful in solidifying the effect of this frame on public opinion and the public agenda. In addition, further inquiry into the relationship between the government's policy and the press coverage received by Indians during this period would be useful in determining why this frame existed in the first place. An answer to Gitlin's question, "why this frame and not another,"[50] should be addressed. What was the impetus to frame Indians and Indian activism in this way? Theory informs us that the dominant ideology will attempt to maintain authority and control when confronted with dissention, but the exact nature of the government's policy during this period would offer insight into what aspects of that dominant ideology were informing this particular media frame. The findings of this study have provided the groundwork for determining the effects of and the forces behind this coverage. The frame has been built. The rest of the picture should now be brought into focus.

# TABLE 1

## Magazines -- Frequencies by Year

| | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Topic* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | - | 1 (14.3%) | 2 (33%) | 1 (16.7%) | 2 (100%) | 14 (70%) | 2 (33%) | - | - | - | 1 (16.7%) | - | 23 (29.5%) |
| Crime | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 (40%) | - | - | - | - | 2 (2.6%) |
| Culture | 1 (25%) | 2 (28.5%) | - | 4 (66.7%) | - | 4 (20%) | 1 (16.7%) | - | 2 (50%) | 1 (14.3%) | - | 1 (20%) | 16 (20.4%) |
| Economic Activity (Indian) | - | 1 (14.3%) | - | - | - | - | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (20%) | 1 (25%) | 1 (14.3%) | 3 (50%) | 2 (40%) | 10 (12.7%) |
| Gov't Economics/Funding | 1 (25%) | 1 (14.3%) | 2 (33%) | - | - | 1 (5%) | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 (6.8%) |
| Gov't General | - | 1 (14.3%) | - | - | - | 1 (5%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (20%) | - | - | - | - | 4 (5.1%) |
| Gov't Land Rights | - | - | 1 (16.7%) | - | - | - | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (20%) | 1 (25%) | 4 (57.1%) | - | 1 (20%) | 9 (11.5%) |
| Public Health & Welfare | 1 (25%) | 1 (14.3%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - | - | - | - | - | 1 (14.3%) | - | - | 5 (6.3%) |
| Other | 1 (25%) | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 (33%) | 1 (20%) | 4 (5.1%) |
| **Total Stories** | **4** | **7** | **6** | **6** | **2** | **20** | **6** | **5** | **4** | **7** | **6** | **5** | **78** |
| *Number/Type of Sources* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Government - named | 5 (4.2%) | 9 (20.9%) | 14 (22.6%) | 4 (16%) | - | 23 (15.4%) | 7 (14%) | 9 (22.5%) | 8 (23.5%) | 8 (16.3%) | 9 (15%) | 7 (20%) | 103 (17.8%) |
| Government - unnamed | 1 (8.3%) | 7 (16.3%) | 8 (12.9%) | - | 4 (22%) | 18 (12.1%) | 6 (12%) | 10 (25%) | 6 (17.6%) | 8 (16.3%) | 7 (11.7%) | 3 (8.6%) | 78 (13.5%) |
| Indian Activist - named | - | 1 (2.3%) | 2 (3.2%) | 2 (8%) | 1 (5.5%) | 14 (9.4%) | 2 (4%) | 4 (10%) | - | - | 3 (5%) | - | 29 (5%) |
| Indian Activist - unnamed | - | 1 (2.3%) | 5 (8%) | - | 3 (16.7%) | 7 (4.7%) | 2 (4%) | 2 (5%) | - | - | - | - | 20 (3.5%) |
| Indian Other - named | 2 (16.7%) | 21 (48.8%) | 13 (21%) | 13 (52%) | 3 (16.7%) | 32 (21.5%) | 13 (26%) | 5 (12.5%) | 7 (20.6%) | 7 (14.2%) | 22 (36.7) | 13 (37.1%) | 151 (26.2%) |
| Indian Other - unnamed | - | 2 (4.7%) | 6 (9.7%) | 5 (20%) | 5 (27.8%) | 20 (13.4%) | 10 (20%) | 2 (5%) | 9 (26.5%) | 7 (14.2%) | 8 (13.3%) | 6 (17.1%) | 80 (13.9%) |
| Expert | 2 (16.7%) | - | 4 (6.5%) | 1 (4%) | 2 (11%) | 4 (2.7%) | - | 2 (5%) | 2 (5.9%) | 9 (18.4%) | 3 (5%) | 1 (2.9%) | 30 (5.2%) |
| Other | 2 (16.7%) | 2 (4.7%) | 10 (16.1%) | - | - | 31 (20.8%) | 10 (20%) | 6 (15%) | 2 (5.9%) | 10 (20.4%) | 8 (13.3%) | 5 (14.3%) | 86 (14.9%) |
| **Total Sources** | **12** | **43** | **62** | **25** | **18** | **149** | **50** | **40** | **34** | **49** | **60** | **35** | **577** |
| *Prominence* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Average Position - Page | 53.5 | 88.29 | 33.8 | 66 | 73 | 44.84 | 54 | 35.6 | 54.75 | 50.71 | 64.8 | 51.6 | 55.9075 |
| Average Length in Paragraphs | 6.25 | 14.29 | 17.5 | 7.83 | 16 | 15.25 | 15.67 | 16.8 | 17.5 | 14.57 | 13.17 | 14.6 | 14.12 |
| Stories with Artwork | 3 (75%) | 7 (100%) | 4 (66.7%) | 6 (100%) | 2 (100%) | 20 (100%) | 5 (83%) | 5 (100%) | 4 (100%) | 6 (85.7%) | 6 (100%) | 5 (100%) | 74 (94.9%) |
| *Legitimacy Measures* | | | | | | | | | | | | | **Stories w/ frame** |
| Mentions of Appearance | 1 | 3 | 7 | - | - | 2 | - | - | 3 | 1 | 2 | - | 13.90% |
| Mentions of Internal Dissention | - | 2 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 18 | - | 4 | - | - | 5 | 1 | 28.20% |
| Mentions of Rights/Treaties | 6 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 21 | 2 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 14 | 8 | 39.70% |
| *Deviancy Measure* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mentions of Violence/Militancy | 1 | 6 | 11 | 5 | 13 | 92 | 8 | 25 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 6 | 55.10% |
| *Stereotyping* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stereotypical Descriptors | 6 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 18 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 55.10% |

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### TABLE 2
### Magazine -- FRAMING DEVICES:
### **Prominence and Dominance by period of publication and topic**

| | Total stories | Mean Length - graphs | Mean Position-Page | Photograph Art (%) | Government Sources | Indian Activist Sources | Other Indian Sources | Other Sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1968-1971* | | | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 4 | 6.75 | 31[c] | 100.00% | 5 | 9[a] | - | 3 |
| Land Rights | 1 | 3 | 49 | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| Other Topic | 18 | 13.72 | 69.72[c] | 88.90% | 42 | 2[a] | 62 | 18 |
| Total | 23 | 7.82 | 49.9 | 87.00% | 48 | 11 | 62 | 21 |
| *1972-1975* | | | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 19 | 15.42[c] | 39.05[c] | 100.00% | 44 | 30[b] | 18 | 31 |
| Land Rights | 2 | 8.5[c] | 61.5[c] | 50.00% | 9 | - | 3 | 10 |
| Other Topic | 13 | 16.15[c] | 55.77[c] | 100.00% | 24 | 6 | 40 | 20 |
| Total | 34 | 13.36 | 52.1 | 97.00% | 77 | 36 | 91 | 61 |
| *1976-1979* | | | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 1 | 5[c] | 27[c] | 100.00% | 3 | 3 | - | - |
| Land Rights | 6 | 12.67[c] | 48.17[c] | 100.00% | 21 | - | 9 | 20 |
| Other Topic | 15 | 16.2[c] | 57.8[c] | 93.30% | 32 | - | 70[a] | 20 |
| Total | 22 | 11.29 | 44.32 | 95.45% | 56 | 3 | 79 | 40 |

ANOVA

[a] Significant at the .05 level

t-test

[c] Significant at the .05 level

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TABLE 3
Magazine - FRAMING DECIVES
**Legitimacy, Deviance** and **Stereotyping** by time period and topic

| | Total stories | Mentions of Appearance | Mentions of Dissention | Mentions of Rights/Treaties | Deviancy Violence | Stereotypical Descriptors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1968-1971* | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9[a] | 6 |
| Land Rights | 1 | - | - | - | - | |
| Other Topic | 18 | 10 | 9 | 17 | 14[a] | 20 |
| Total | 23 | 11 | 14 | 20 | 23 | 26 |
| *1972-1975* | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 19 | 2 | 20 | 18[a] | 111[b] | 20 |
| Land Rights | 2 | - | - | 9 | 3 | - |
| Other Topic | 13 | - | 4 | 10 | 29 | 10 |
| Total | 34 | 2 | 24 | 37 | 143 | 30 |
| *1976-1979* | | | | | | |
| Activist Event | 1 | - | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Land Rights | 6 | 1 | - | 11 | 7 | 3 |
| Other Topic | 15 | 5 | 4[a] | 19 | 17 | 6 |
| Total | 22 | 6 | 6 | 33 | 27 | 10 |

ANOVA

[a] Significant at the .05 level

[b] Significant at the .01 level

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## TABLE 4
## AGENDA SETTING:
Topic by time period of publication

| | Activist Event | Gov't Land Rights | Other | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Magazines* | | | | |
| 1968-1971 | 4 (17.4%) | 1 (4.3%) | 18 (78.3%) | 23 |
| 1972-1975 | 19 (55.9%) | 2 (5.9%) | 13 (38.2%) | 34 |
| 1976-1979 | 1 (4.5%) | 6 (27.3%) | 15 (68.2%) | 22 |

Chi-Square test revealed significance at the .01 level
$\chi^2 = 24.451$

## NOTES

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[1] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980): 16.

[2] Ibid., 3.

[3] Robert Anderson et al., eds., *Voices from Wounded Knee, 1973: In the Words of the Participants* (Rooseveltown, New York: Akwasasne Notes, 1976): 136.

[4] The noun "Indian" was purposefully chosen. To use "Native American" would take this topic out of its historical context. All news stories, personal accounts, and books written in and about this period refer to the participants as Indians. To keep the story in this frame, I chose to refer to them as such myself.

[5] Russell Means, leader of AIM, as quoted in "Behind the Indians' Uprising: What They Have – and Want" in *US News & World Report* (Nov. 20, 1972): 109.

[6] Sherry Means, "Introduction to the American Indian Movement: 101," in *AIM Homepage* (http://www.dickshovel.com/aim101.html).

[7] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974): 10.

[8] Ibid., 21.

[9] Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*, 6.

[10] Ibid., 7.

[11] Ibid., 28-29.

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] These studies include: Laura Ashley and Beth Olson, "Constructing Reality: Print Media's Framing of the Women's Movement, 1966-1986," in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (Summer, 1998): 263-277; Patrick J. Daley and Beverly James, "Framing the News: Socialism as Deviance," in *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 3 (Fall, 1988): 37-46; Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., "From Bad to Worse: The Media's Framing of Race and Risk," in *Media Studies Journal* 8 (Summer, 1994): 36-48; Robert A. Hackett and Yeuzhi Zhao, "Challenging the Master Narrative: Peace Protest and Opinion/Editorial Discourse in the US Press During the Gulf War" in *Discourse and Society* 5 (October, 1994): 509-541; James K. Hertog and Douglas McLeod, "Anarchists Wreak Havoc in Downtown Minneapolis: A Multi-level Study of Media Coverage of Radical Protest" a *Journalism and Mass Communication Monograph* 151 (June, 1995), and William S. Solomon, "News Frames and Media Packages: Covering El Salvador," in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 9 (March, 1992): 56-74.

[14] Laura Ashley and Beth Olson, "Constructing Reality: Print Media's Framing of the Women's Movement, 1966-1986," in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (Summer, 1998): 263.

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[15] Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" in *Journal of Communication* 43:4 (Autumn, 1993):53.

[16] Lee Jussim, Lerita M. Coleman and Lauren Lerch, "The Nature of Stereotypes: A Comparison and Integration of Three Theories," in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52:3 (1987):537.

[17] Patricia W. Linville and Edward E. Jones, "Polarized Appraisals of Out-Group Members," in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38:5 (1980):692.

[18] Andre Gamson and William A. Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," in *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (July, 1989): 1-37.

[19] Gerald M. Kosicki and Zhongdang Pan, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," *Political Communication* 10 (Jan.-March, 1993): 55-73.

[20] Entman, "Framing," 57.

[21] Maxwell McCombs, "Building Consensus: The News Media's Agenda-Setting Roles," in *Political Communication* 14 (1997):435.

[22] Maxwell McCombs, Lucig Danielian, and Wayne Wanta, "Issues in the News and the Public Agenda: The Agenda-Setting Tradition," in *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent,* Theodore L. Glasser and Charles T. Salmon, Eds. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995):289.

[23] Clarice N. Olien, George A. Donohue, and Phillip J. Tichenor, "Conflict, Consensus, and Public Opinion," in *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent,* Theodore L. Glasser and Charles T. Salmon, Eds. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995):320.

[24] William B. Blankenburg, "The Role of the Press in an Indian Massacre, 1871," *Journalism Quarterly* 45 (1968): 61-70.

[25] Sharon M. Murphy and James E. Murphy, "American Indians and the Media: Neglect and Stereotype" in *Journalism History* 6:2 (1979):43.

[26] Sharon M. Murphy, *Let my People Know: American Indian Journalism, 1828-1978* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

[27] Mary Ann Weston, Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996):138.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 140.

[30] Robert G. Hays, *A Race at Bay: New York Times Editorials on "The Indian Problem," 1860-1900*, (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997).

[31] Patty Loew, "Natives, Newspapers, and 'Fighting Bob:' Wisconsin Chippewa in the 'Unprogressive' Era," in *Journalism History* 23:4 (Winter 1997-1998): 149-158.

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[32] John W. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity and the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1999) 11.

[33] Alexis Tan, Yuki Fujioka, and Nancy Lucht, "Native American Stereotypes, TV Portrayals and Personal Contact," in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (Summer, 1997) 265-284.

[34] These histories include: Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island* (Urbana Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, Eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk*, (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Paul Chaat Smith, *Like a hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York : New Press, 1996). The role of the press is mentioned briefly in these histories. No where has the issue of framing been addressed.

[35] Adam Fortunate Eagle, *Alcatraz! Alcatraz!: The Indian Occupation of 1969-1971* (Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books, 1992) 118.

[36] Ibid., 15.

[37] Ibid., 119.

[38] Tim Findley, "Alcatraz Recollections" in *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk*, Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, Eds. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 84.

[39] Coding categories were adopted from the similar content analysis study by Ashley and Olson, "Constructing Reality."

[40] Categories were adapted from an earlier study by Jennifer Bowie, "Policy and Press Coverage: Changing coverage of Native Americans and Native American issues in the press" presented at the AEJMC National Convention in Baltimore, MD, 1998. Sub-headings in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* served as a loose guideline for this categorization system. Categories are in accordance with the Deutschmann system tested by Guido H. Stempel III, "Topic and Story Choice of Five Network Newscasts," in *Journalism Quarterly* (1988): 750-752.

[41] *Research Methods in Mass Communication* 2nd ed., Guido H. Stempel, III and Bruce H. Westley, Eds. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981) 133.

[42] For this study, statistical significance of the samples used for the study was verified by t-tests. Significant variance between group means was established through the use of the one-way ANOVA.

[43] The impact of un-resolved conflict on public opinion is discussed in Olien, Donohue, and Tichenor, "Conflict, Consensus and Public Opinion."

[44] Frank Trippett, "Should We Give the US Back to the Indians?" in *Time* (April 11, 1977) 52.

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[45] Vine Deloria, "The American Indian Image in North America," in *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native American in the Movies,* Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, Eds. (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa States University Press, 1980): 51.

[46] Chi-Square value was 24.451, which was significant at $p \leq .0001$.

[47] Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching,* 14.

[48] "A Paleface Uprising," in *Newsweek* (April 10, 1978): 39.

[49] Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching,* 3.

[50] Ibid., 7.

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# Cuddly Bear and Vicious Ape:

## Soviets and Germans in editorial cartoons, 1933-1946

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Paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, New Orleans, August 4, 1999.

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### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of the Soviet Union in one form of journalism—the editorial cartoon—before, during, and immediately after World War II. In the sample analyzed here, there were more editorial cartoons of Germany and the Soviet Union than of any other countries, undoubtedly because of the changes in relationships between America and these two countries. Editorial cartoons during this period probably helped crystallize public opinion of Germany and the Soviet Union. The main goal of this study was to examine the tone of the coverage of the Soviet Union in visual opinion journalism to see if it matched the public opinion polls from the same period.

In the past century the United States has had a unique relationship with Russia and the former Soviet Union. Some historians have shown that before World War

II, most Americans felt the German and Soviet governments were essentially the same—equally disgusting. *Fortune* magazine ran a poll in October 1941 and found that "roughly one third of the American people thought that the Russian and German governments were equally bad. When confronted with an hypothetical choice between Communism and Fascism, from 1937 to 1939, more Americans expressed a preference for Fascism than for Communism."[1] Americans, then, it seems were more fearful of the Soviet political system than they were of the German political system in the period before the war. It would be expected that editorial cartoons would match these feelings by portraying the Soviets at least as unfavorably—if not more unfavorably—than the Germans in the period before the war. Even with the memory of German aggression during World War I fairly fresh in their minds, Americans found the Soviet system more "scary" than the German system. Editorial cartoons from before World War II could be expected to depict the Soviets in an unflattering light—the same way they depict the Germans during this period.

However, this study found the unexpected: in the tone of editorial cartoons, there were major differences in the way that Germany and the U.S.S.R. were depicted, even during the period after the Danzig Pact when the two countries were supposedly working together as allies. Throughout the 14-year period of this study, Germany was portrayed as a much greater threat, and was consistently depicted in editorial cartoons as a villainous and despicable totalitarian regime, while favorable cartoons of the Soviets were fairly common throughout the period.

## Background

Editorial cartoons are an important tool for newspapers, allowing them to "flex their editorial muscles," so to speak, and help reflect or affect public opinion of news makers in a humorous way. Several authors argue that the editorial cartoon is an important tool in the formation of public opinion on various salient social issues.[2] Morrison says it is the visual nature of editorial cartoons that makes them an especially powerful medium in the formation of public opinion.[3] Cartoons are "communication to the quick," as Harrison says, with "all the advantages of speed and all the dangers of haste."[4] To assess the power of editorial cartoons to affect public opinion, we have to understand how they work. Perhaps the greatest power of editorial cartoons is in their ability to simplify and "crystallize the complex events of the day,"[5] making them easy to understand and to remember.

For instance, in 1870, cartoonist Thomas Nast portrayed the "Tweed Ring" as a flock of vultures perched atop a carcass representing New York City. (See Figure 1.) Tweed and his lieutenants were a group of politicians who controlled New York City politics and Tammany Hall at the time. This vulture image tainted Tweed and his colleagues and stayed with them even after they were indicted and lost control of New York City politics in 1871.[6] According to Keller, Nast played a pivotal role in shaping the editorial policy of *Harper's Weekly*.[7] Other editorial cartoonists have played significant roles in influencing public opinion.

Herbert Block, known as Herblock, the political cartoonist for the Washington Post, is credited with initiating open and public criticism of Sen. Joseph McCarthy in 1950 and for coining the term "McCarthyism" when most other journalists were afraid to confront McCarthy.[8] Herblock's cartoons were very influential. Richard

Nixon, when starting his campaign for the presidency, reportedly said that he needed to "erase the Herblock image" of him—a sleazy crook—from when he was Eisenhower's vice-president.[9]

Political cartoonists often have expressed attitudes and opinions considered dangerous by regular news columnists. Perhaps the reason that editorial cartoonists can be so successful at social and political commentary is because criticisms are contained within humorous vehicles that are easier to "swallow" and more difficult to dismiss. As outspoken critics, political cartoonists are without equal. Their tone is frequently negative, and—when they are doing their jobs well—their barbs are sharp. Dennis says the "most powerful" editorial cartoons are usually "scorching indictments of people and issues."[10]

Editorial cartoons operate through exaggeration and caricature—"deliberately inaccurate" pictures, according to Perkins.[11] In that sense, editorial cartoons are journalistic anachronisms. The truths revealed by editorial cartoon humor are often conveyed through the use of inaccuracy and ridicule, so editorial cartoons can also be called "unfair, negative and nihilistic," according to Harrison.[12]

Kolaja says editorial cartoons are a form of social control because of the conflict function of humor.[13] Editorial cartooning has two main functions, "ridiculing the opponent, [and] strengthening . . . the morale of the artist's own group."[14] Kolaja says that the choice (or non-choice) of a particular subject is important, because "by not emphasizing certain issues we decrease their social significance."[15] So questions about: a) what topics are discussed; b) what topics are not discussed; and c) why certain topics are discussed, are important in the study of editorial cartooning and its relationship to public opinion.

## Time period

The study concentrates on the period from 1933 to 1946, which was from the beginning of the Roosevelt administration to one year after the conclusion of World War II.

This section explains the reasons for the selection of this time period, and provides a context for the findings. The main reason for the selection of the time period, of course, is that during this period the Soviets were perceived as a threat to the U.S., then they became an ally, and finally, they became a threat again. When the Roosevelt administration took office in 1933, an increased fear of communism began among Americans. Investigations into alleged commanists in government were started that year by the FBI. President Roosevelt also initiated official U.S. recognition of the Soviet government in 1933.[16]

In the 1930s, America did not trust the Soviets almost as much as it distrusted Hitler and Mussolini. When Germany and the Soviets signed the Danzig non-aggression pact in 1939, the U.S. began to see the Soviets as fellow fascists, allied with the Nazis.

> Communism and the Soviet Union had not been very popular in the United States from the days of the Palmer raids [1919-20] to the Dies committee investigations on the eve of World War II. The Molotov-Ribbentrop [Danzig] pact and the Winter War further damaged Russia's bleak image to a point in the spring of 1940 where she may have been the Americans' least favorite nation.[17]

Two years later, in 1941, when Hitler reneged on the pact and attacked the Soviets, the U.S. reluctantly embraced the Soviets as an ally. As Small (1974) has noted:

> Then came Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 and the subsequent fashioning of a Russian-American alliance of necessity.
>
> By 1943, the nature of the alliance had changed. As the months of shared war experiences passed, relations between the two great powers seemed to warm to a point where many Americans, perhaps a majority, claimed to respect and even admire the Soviet Union.[18]

During this period, many American journalists seemed to admire the courage of the Soviets. One reason for this may have been that they traveled to Russia and got to know them face-to-face. Many journalists wrote about how nice the Soviets were and how great the Red Army was. The American people changed their minds about the Soviets, too. In September 1944, a nationwide poll revealed that "almost a third of the American people acknowledged that between 1939 and 1944 they had come to hold a more favorable view of the Soviet system."[19] In the same poll, only 7 percent of the respondents believed the Soviet Union would be an aggressive force to reckon with after the war. In 1942, the New York Times Magazine ran an article that heralded the Red Army as perhaps the best in the world.[20] Magazines particularly contributed to the growing respect for the Soviets. Historian John Gaddis notes that:

> *Life* outdid all its competitors with a special issue on Russia in March, 1943, which proclaimed, among other things, that Lenin was "perhaps the greatest man of modern times," that the Russians were "one hell of a people . . . [who] to a remarkable degree . . . look like Americans,

> dress like Americans and think like Americans," that the NKVD was "a national police similar to the FBI," and that Americans should "not get too excited about the fact that the Russians lived "under a system of tight, state-controlled information. . . . If the Soviet leaders tell us that the control of information was necessary to get the job done, we can afford to take their word for it."[21]

In 1942, James (Scotty) Reston, the *New York Times* journalist, asked other journalists to refrain from writing editorials critical of the Soviets because "they can do positive harm, as any reporter who has stepped inside a Russian embassy can tell you."[22] Willen (1954) argues that to sustain morale in our soldiers, and to maintain the lend-lease programs, it was necessary to "create and intensify feelings of good will toward our allies and to sustain a mood of optimism generally toward the future" (p. 262).

John Wilhelm, who worked as a war correspondent, recalls that "the Russian Army were extremely kind to us. Nobody ever asked us to write good things about Russia" because they didn't need to.[23] Not surprisingly, American reporters genuinely liked the Russian people once they got to know them, according to Wilhelm. War correspondents who traveled with the Russian Army were probably more likely to feel sympathy for them than were editorial cartoonists, who usually stayed home in the U.S. to do their work.

Only after World War II, and after the Soviets had seized control of several countries along its borders in 1945-46, did the U.S. begin to see the Soviets as a threat once again.

"The first discernible shift in American attitudes toward the Soviet Union came in the first six months of 1945, when the war with Germany was brought to an end, and when the Soviet intention to absorb all of Eastern Europe into her orbit became clear," says Willen.[24] For that reason, 1946, the first year after the war, is important because it is the first full year after the turning point in U.S.-Soviet relations—the beginning of the cold war.

The study is separated into four time periods: from January 1, 1933 to just before the Danzig pact on August 21, 1939; the period between the Danzig pact and the initial German attack on Russia on June 22, 1941; the period between the attack and the end of the war in Europe in May 1945; and from June 1945 through the end of 1946.

## Sampling

Two separate samples of editorial cartoons were collected. The first, and primary one, was a stratified random sample of all editorial cartoons during the period under study in three major newspapers, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. These three newspapers were chosen because they regularly printed editorial cartoons during the period.[25] Many major U.S. newspapers only rarely used editorial cartoons during this period. The sample contained 983 cartoons by over 110 different artists. This sample provides a glimpse at not only how the Soviets were depicted, but also gives clues about what other topics were salient during the period. This sample allowed an estimation of the relative importance of the Soviets as a subject of editorial cartooning.

The second sample, which was non-random, was comprised of only cartoons of the Soviets, and only during three periods of time immediately following important, or pivotal developments in regard to the U.S.S.R. They are: the period of two months after the Danzig pact was announced—August 21, 1939, to October 20, 1939; the period of two months after the initial German attack of Russia—June 22, 1941, to August 20, 1941; and, the period of two months when the Russians retook Rostov and stopped the advance of the Germans toward Moscow—November 29, 1941, to January 28, 1942. This sample contained 64 cartoons.

The 14-year period was divided into 56 quarter-yearly periods, and a sample of three weeks from each of the 14 years was constructed, stratified to ensure that each of the weeks chosen came from a different quarter-yearly period. Every week in the 14-year period had an equal chance of being selected. The 983 cartoons in the sample were coded according to size, subject, favorability of caricature and favorability of the overall message or context.

## Coding

Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) say editorial cartooning is a form of persuasive communication that relies on specific elements of graphic imagery.[26] They examined the rhetorical form of the editorial cartoon and identified six elements of graphic style: 1. use of line and form; 2. exaggeration of physical features; 3. placement within the frame; 4. relative size of objects; 5. relation of text to visual imagery; and 6. rhythmic montage. Each of these characteristics were examined and used in the evaluation of the cartoons during the coding process.

Caricature and overall message were each rated on a 5-point scale: very favorable, favorable, neutral, unfavorable, and very unfavorable. Editorial cartoon caricatures are generally not flattering to the subject. Therefore, if a cartoon was a fair representation of the subject, it was rated as a favorable caricature. If it glamorized the subject, it was rated as very favorable. If it had a flattering part and an unflattering part, it was rated as neutral. If the subject portrayed had a feature which would tend to be considered unflattering, such as wild eyes and a heavy scowl, the caricature was rated as unfavorable. If it had features that were extremely derogatory, such as the subject hiding a knife behind his or her back, it was rated very unfavorable.

When coding overall message, the entire cartoon was analyzed for the impression that it gave about the subject. For example, in Figure 2, a bear rug representing Russia is shown lying on the floor in Adolf Hitler's living room. It suddenly awakes, frightening the Fuehrer. Although the caricature of Russia is not flattering, it is a fair representation of how Russia fared at the beginning of the winter in late 1941. Later in the winter, the Russian bear awoke, turning back the Nazis and retaking Rostov. This cartoon was rated as having a favorable caricature and a favorable overall message. When determining the favorability of the overall message, it is also important to read the most important contextual clue—the caption. For instance, in Figure 3, Russia is shown as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, although this may not be apparent without reading the caption. In this case the caricature was rated as neutral—because there is a positive and a negative element. The overall message was rated as very unfavorable because Russia is shown as being two-faced and ruthless with its citizens.

The cartoons were separated into four categories of subject matter for statistical analysis: domestic issues, international issues (other than the Axis countries and the Soviets), the Axis countries (Germany, Italy and Japan), and the Soviet Union. The "Domestic" category contained cartoons dealing with local, state and national topics such as politics, crime, legislation, the economy and unemployment. The "International" category contained mostly items dealing with the other allies of the United States, primarily Great Britain. It also contained cartoons about foreign relations issues before the government.

The coding was done entirely by the author. Reliability testing (repeatability of coding decisions) revealed an 80.4 percent agreement and a Scott's π rating of .795 with a duplicate coding of fifty decisions done at the end of the study.[17]

## Results

Throughout the period, most cartoons dealt with domestic issues (Figure 4). In the period before the Danzig pact, 64.4 percent of the cartoons dealt with domestic issues (Table 1). After the Germans attacked Russia, many more of the cartoons dealt with the Axis—Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan. The Soviet Union was not a predominant subject at any time in the sample, except during two brief periods. The first was immediately following the signing of the Danzig pact. The second was immediately after Germany attacked Russia. In the first, the reaction was highly unfavorable to the Soviets. In the second, it was more lighthearted—almost ridiculing the Soviets for being beaten-up by Hitler and now courting the Allies (for example, see Figures 5 and 6).

Shortly after the Soviets became an ally, cartoonists began to praise the fortitude of the "Defenders of Moscow." Figure 7, which is typical of the period after Russia was attacked, shows a bare arm serving as a deadbolt to the attack of the Nazis. Figure 8 is an example of a cartoon in the latter part of the war. Stalin is shown leading the charge, with Roosevelt and Churchill right behind him. Hitler is covered with bruises and bandages, and runs crying to his mother, the German people.

In the period after the Danzig pact, half of the cartoons of the Soviet Union contained messages or contexts which were rated unfavorable. Table 2 illustrates the shift in favorability of coverage of the Soviets. After the Germans attacked Russia, 76 percent of the cartoons of Soviets had overall messages rated either favorable or very favorable. This tremendous shift matched the prevailing tide of public opinion that was documented in the surveys previously mentioned. Editorial cartoonists went along with their fellow journalists in praising the Soviets for their stand against the Nazis.

In the main sample, 43.1 percent of the 983 cartoons were rated unfavorable caricatures (Figure 9). This indicates that the average editorial cartoon was slightly unfavorable (roughly between neutral and unfavorable) to its subject, both in caricature and message. In the smaller sample of only Soviet cartoons, in all four periods the overall messages tended to be favorable to the Soviets, particularly before they signed the Danzig pact, and again after they were attacked by the Germans (Table 2). Remarkably, this shows that cartoonists were more favorable toward the Soviets than they were toward domestic affairs. Editorial cartoonists evidently took off their "kid gloves" when dealing with domestic issues such as inflation and unemployment—both of which were serious national problems in the post-depression era before the Danzig pact was signed.

I think this finding—that domestic issues were treated more unfavorably than the Soviets—is perhaps not so unexpected. When Americans talk about their own problems, they tend to exaggerate and pontificate. When they talk about other countries, they perhaps become more philosophical, putting things in context.

The notion that editorial cartoonists saw the German Nazis and the Soviet Communists as equally evil in the period before the Germans attacked the Soviets is refuted by the evidence. Out of 202 cartoons in the complete sample dealing with the Axis (Germany, Japan and Italy), more than two-thirds were ranked either "unfavorable" or "very unfavorable," in caricature and overall message. The data suggest that the Axis was portrayed in an extremely unfavorable light throughout the period of the study. The Soviets were portrayed more favorably than Germany throughout the period of the study. The Soviets were often portrayed as a big bear, and the Germans were also often portrayed as a wild animal—a large ape, like an overgrown gorilla. In Figure 10, the gorilla with a rock in one hand is seen snatching the fair woman, "Peace," atop Europe. In Figure 11, the gorilla and bear are sleeping together—a remark about the Danzig Pact. But while the Russian bear looks harmless, almost cuddly, the German gorilla has a dagger in one hand. In Figure 12, the gorilla with a swastika armband is a self-proclaimed "savior of civilization," wielding a club marked "Murder, Destruction, Persecution." These are examples of the use of symbolic creatures to represent countries. In all cartoons, it seems that the Soviet "bear" is neither as menacing nor ferocious as the German "gorilla."

Cartoonists also played with the personal characteristics of the world's leaders. Editorial cartoonists were merciless in making fun of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, while they seemed to be much kinder and gentler to Joseph Stalin. This might have been more of a function of the leaders' looks than anything else. As Blackwood discovered in a study of Canadian editorial cartoonists, the reason one leader is drawn more often than others, or with a more exaggerated caricature, can be because the particular person may have facial features that lend themselves to caricature:

> John Dafoe, editorial editor for the [Winnipeg] Free Press, explained it differently: '[Jimmy] Carter just didn't make a very good villain,' he said. He pointed out that cartoons depend on caricature; and that caricatures of Carter depended on his wide, toothy smiles, a caricature by its nature difficult to portray as villainous.
>
> Dale Cummings, editorial cartoonist for the Free Press, said, "I really like to draw [Ronald] Reagan... he's a really ugly man."[28]

Using this line of reasoning, albeit simplistic, it would be fair to speculate that one of the reasons Adolf Hitler's caricatures in editorial cartoons were often unfavorable was because Hitler—with his small moustache and balding head—had a face that lent itself to ugly distortion, while Joseph Stalin with his bushy hair and moustache may have simply looked less villainous. In fact, Stalin's caricature often had a wide grin (for example, see Figure 8).

## Conclusions

Throughout the period that was investigated, Soviets were depicted relatively favorably in editorial cartoons. There was not much of a shift in the amount of neutral cartoons of the Soviets. There was, however, a large decrease in the amount of unfavorable depictions of the Soviets after the Germans attacked Russia. Germany, not surprisingly, was depicted unfavorably throughout the period.

The fact that the Soviets were depicted rather favorably—even while they were allied with Germany—seems even more amazing when we notice that, on average, domestic issues in the United States were portrayed more unfavorably in editorial cartoons than were the Soviets. American editorial cartoonists admired the Soviets during and after the war—even more than they did some of the institutions in their own country.

The choice of animal "mascot" used to represent a particular country is an interesting phenomena. In many of the cartoons found during this study that depicted Japanese, the same ape character used to depict Nazi Germany was also used. Perhaps this is some sort of universal iconic racist shorthand for "fascist" or perhaps, enemy. This prospect deserves further study.

Editorial cartoons are certainly a fertile ground for study, as the thinking and decision-making that go into the composition, design, and message construction show an enormous amount of cleverness and creative thinking. They are fascinating journalistic anachronisms because they often break the principles of fairness and objectivity through irreverence and biting humor. Cartoonist Doug Marlette says "Cartoonists use unfairness, subjectivity and distortion of facts to get at truths that are greater than the sum of the facts."[29]

The main finding of this study is that the opinions expressed in editorial cartoons did not match the apparent public opinion that Americans preferred fascism to communism during this period . The reason that pollsters found that the American public saw the Soviets and Germans as equally "bad" is unknown, but it cannot be blamed on editorial cartoonists. Between 1933 and 1946, editorial cartoonists never equated the two.

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## Notes:

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[1] Quoted in Walsh, Warren B. (1944-45, Winter). "What the American People Think of Russia," *Public Opinion Quarterly 8*(4): 513-522.

[2] Dennis, Everette E. (1974, Winter). "The Regeneration of Political Cartooning." *Journalism Quarterly 51*: 664-69; Vinson, J. Chal. (1967). *Thomas Nast: Political Cartoonist*. Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia., p. 20.

[3] Morrison, Michael C. (1969, Winter). "The Role of the Political Cartoonist in Image Making," *Central States Speech Journal.*, p. 253.

[4] Harrison, Randall P. (1981). *The Cartoon: Communication to the quick*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage., p. 12.

[5] Harrison, p. 79.

[6] Vinson, p. 20.

[7] Keller, Morton . (1968). *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[8] Block, Herbert. (1974). *Herblock Special Report*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 22.

[9] Block, p. 54.

[10] Dennis, p. 664.

[11] Perkins, David. (1976). "A definition of caricature and recognition," *Studies in Visual Communication* 2 (1): 1-23.

[12] Harrison, p. 114.

[13] Kolaja, Jiri. (1953). "American magazine cartoons and social control." *Journalism Quarterly 30*:71-74., p. 71.

[14] Kolaja, pp. 71-72.

[15] Kolaja, p. 74.

[16] Gaddis, John Lewis. (1972). *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*. New York: Columbia University Press., p. 4.

[17] Small, Melvin. (1974, May). "How we learned to love the Russians: American media and the Soviet Union during World War II." *The Historian 36*(3), p. 456.

[18] Small, p. 456.

[19] Willen, Paul. (1954, Sept.). "Who 'Collaborated' With Russia?" *Antioch Review 14*(3): 259-283.

[20] Sulzberger, Cyrus L. (1942, Jan. 4). "Sergei, Red Fighter," *New York Times Magazine*, pp. 4, 23.

[21] Gaddis, p. 38.

[22] Quoted in Willen, p. 261.

[23] Wilhelm, John. (1989, October). Personal communication.

[24] Willen, p. 281.

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[25] The *New York Times* only ran editorial cartoons on Sundays, but it often ran more than a dozen on a given Sunday, so it was the most prolific source of material. The *Times* ran cartoons from artists at different papers around the country, as well as occasionally from other newspapers around the world. The *Washington Post* ran cartoons every day at the beginning of the sample period, but during the war, it cut back to just one or two, on Sundays. Most of the *Post's* cartoons were drawn by its own artists, but occasionally it used cartoons from other papers. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* used cartoons almost daily, and almost always by its in-house artist.

[26] Medhust; Martin and DeSousa, Michael. (1981, Sept.) "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse." *Communication Monographs 48*: 197-236.

[27] Stempel, Guido H. III and Westley, Bruce H. (eds.) (1989). *Research Methods in Mass Communication, 2nd ed.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall., p. 148.

[28] Blackwood, Roy E. (1989). "Ronbo and the Peanut Farmer In Canadian Editorial Cartoons," *Journalism Quarterly 66*: 453-457., p. 456.

[29] Kenney, Keith, Lee Zukowski, and Carl Glassman. (1996). Dueling stereotypes of politicians. Pp. 179–184 in Paul Lester (Ed.) *Images that Injure*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers., p. 182.

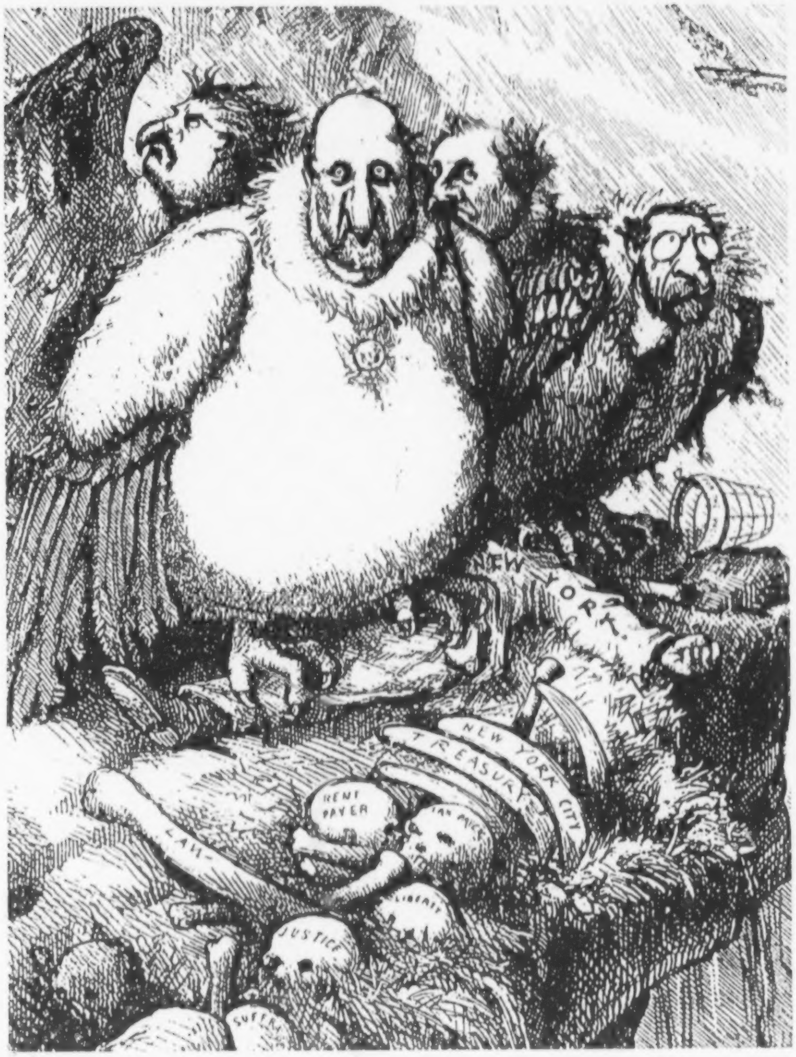

Figure 1. Nast's "Tweed Ring."

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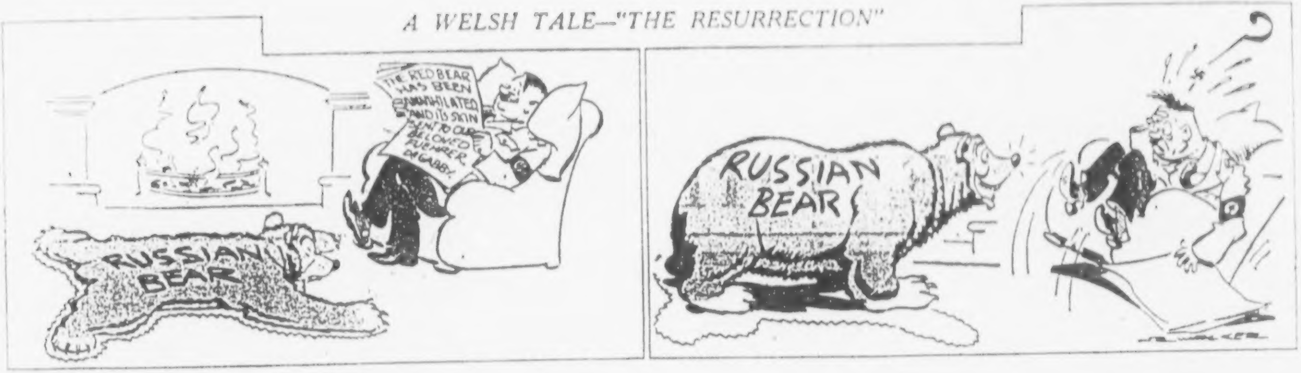
A WELSH TALE—"THE RESURRECTION"
THE RED BEAR HAS BEEN ANNIHILATED AND ITS SKIN SENT TO OUR BELOVED FUEHRER. DR GABBY
RUSSIAN BEAR
RUSSIAN BEAR

Figure 2. *New York Times*, Jan. 4, 1942

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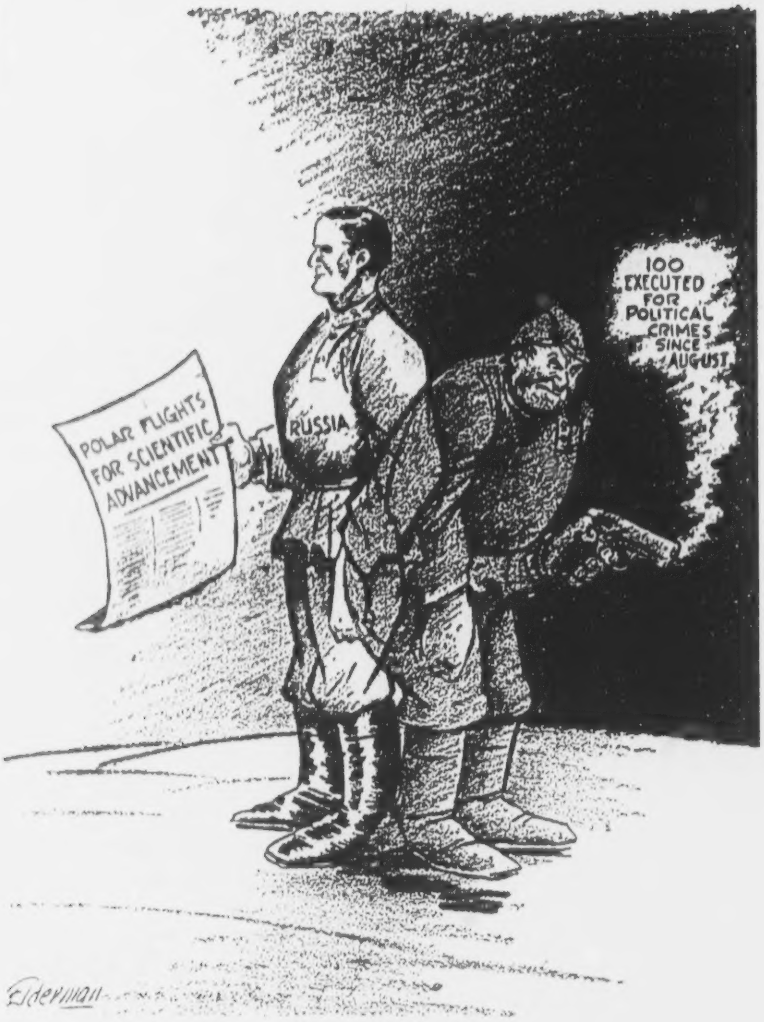
POLAR FLIGHTS FOR SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT
RUSSIA
100 EXECUTED FOR POLITICAL CRIMES SINCE AUGUST
Elderman

Jekyll And Hyde.

Figure 3. *The Washington Post*, May 24, 1937

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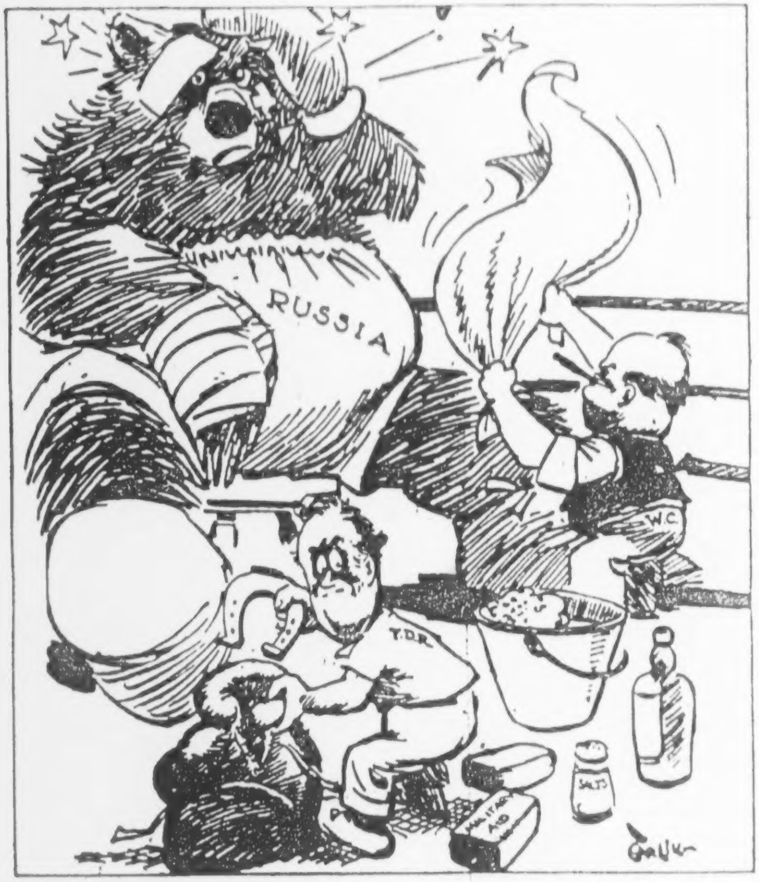

Carlisle in The St. Louis Globe-Democrat

"There's nothing like having good seconds."

Figure 5. *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1941

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**Table 1. Frequency of cartoon topics, by time period**

| | Domestic | Int'l | Axis | Soviets | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before Danzig | **64.4%** | **16.1%** | **16.1%** | **3.4%** | |
| Jan 1, 1933–Aug 21, 1939 | 360 | 90 | 90 | 19 | 559 |
| After Danzig | **38.8%** | **23.7%** | **27.3%** | **10.1%** | |
| Aug 22, 1939–Jun 22, 1941 | 54 | 33 | 38 | 14 | 139 |
| Mid-war | **38.8%** | **17.6%** | **37.6%** | **6.1%** | |
| Jun 23, 1941–May 31, 1945 | 64 | 29 | 62 | 10 | 165 |
| End of war | **57.5%** | **30%** | **10%** | **2.5%** | |
| Jun 1, 1945–Dec 31, 1946 | 69 | 36 | 12 | 3 | 120 |

n = 983, df = 9, chi square 85.86, p < .0001

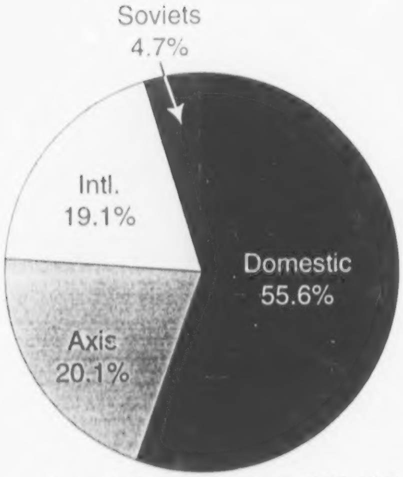

Figure 4 The mix of topics 1933-1946
n = 983

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**Table 2. Favorability of overall message regarding Soviets, by period (using smaller, non-random sample)**

| | Very favorable | Favorable | Neutral | Unfavorable | Very unfavorable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before Danzig<br>Jun 1, 1933–Aug 21, 1939 | **4.4%**<br>1 | **43.5%**<br>10 | **21.7%**<br>5 | **17.4%**<br>4 | **13.0%**<br>3 |
| After Danzig<br>Aug 22, 1939–Jun 22, 1941 | **6.25%**<br>1 | **6.25%**<br>1 | **25%**<br>4 | **50%**<br>8 | **12.5%**<br>2 |
| Mid-war<br>Jun 23, 1941–May 31, 1945 | **19.1%**<br>4 | **57.1%**<br>12 | **14.3%**<br>3 | **4.8%**<br>1 | **4.8%**<br>1 |
| End of war<br>Jun 1, 1945–Dec 31, 1946 | **0%**<br>0 | **25%**<br>1 | **50%**<br>2 | **25%**<br>1 | **0%**<br>0 |

n = 64

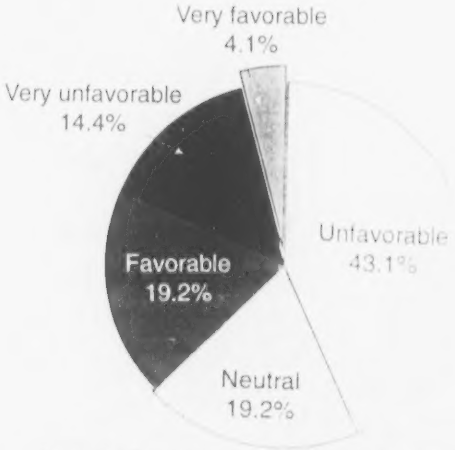

Figure 9. Favorability of caricatures for the full sample, n = 983

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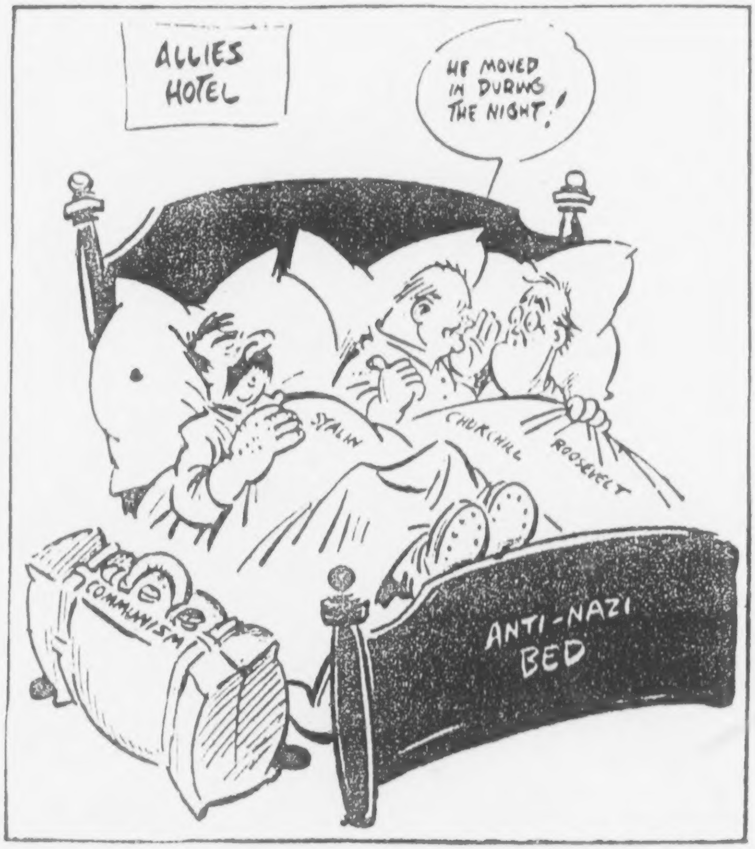

Hungerford in The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

"Our new bedfellow."

Figure 6. *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1941

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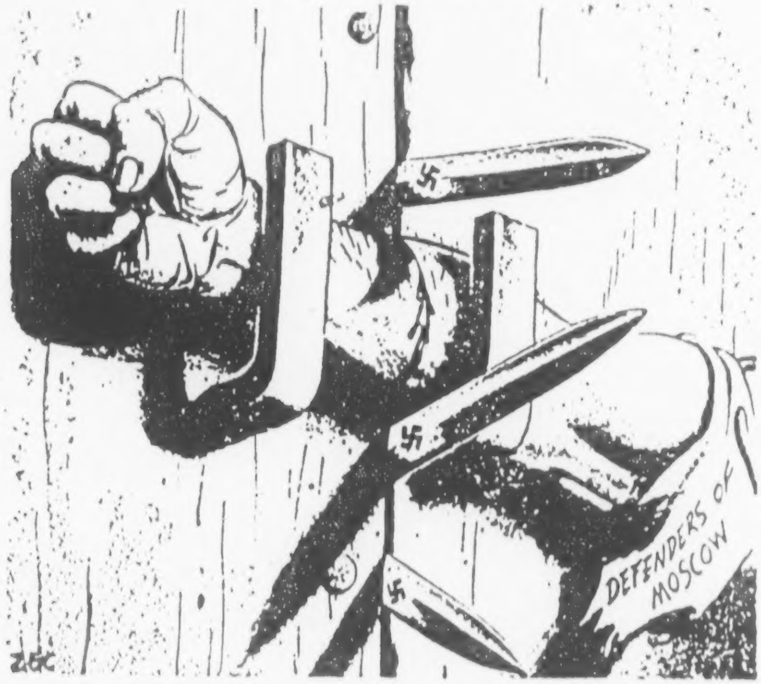
"TO THE DEATH"



Zec in The London Daily Mirror

**As it appears to London.**

Figure 7. *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1941

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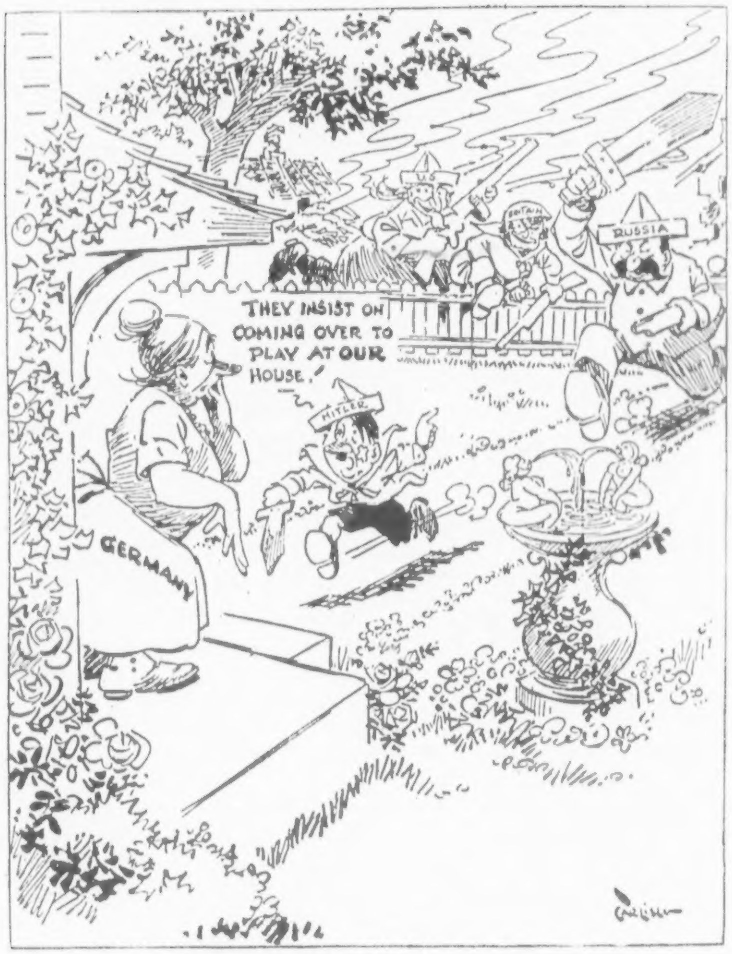
U.S.
BRITAIN
RUSSIA
THEY INSIST ON COMING OVER TO PLAY AT OUR HOUSE!
HITLER
GERMANY

YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO PLAY ALL THE TIME
AT THE NEIGHBOR'S, ADOLF

Figure 8. *The Washington Post*, Oct. 24, 1943

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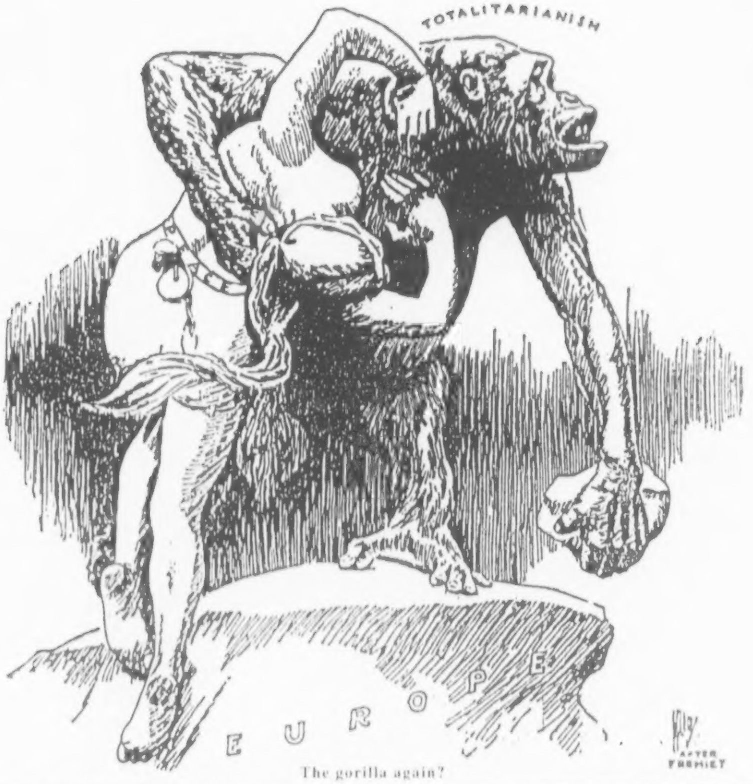

The gorilla again?

Figure 10. *New York Times*, Aug. 27, 1939

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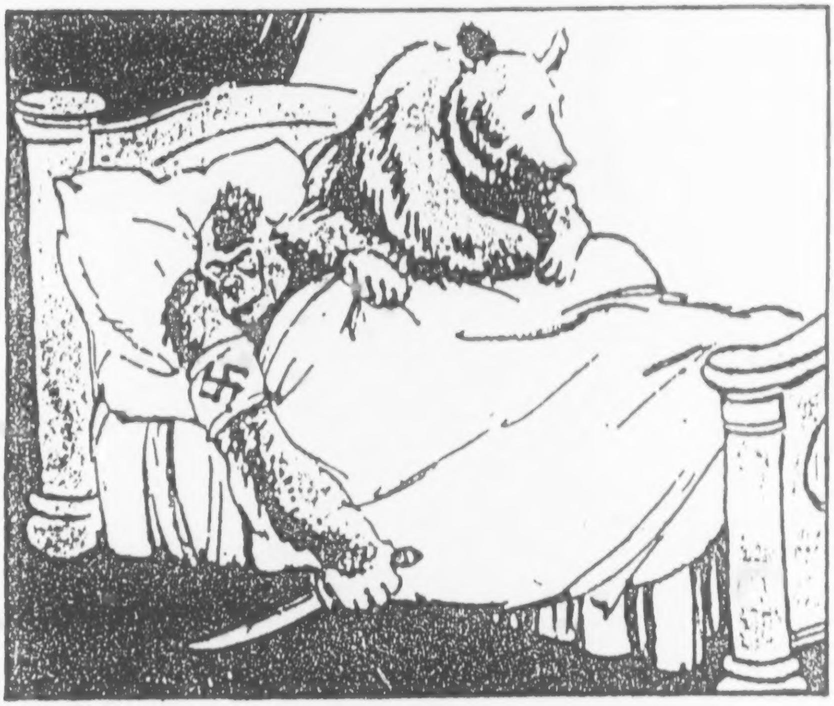

London Evening News

1939—"Strange bedfellows."

Figure 11. *New York Times*, June 29, 1941

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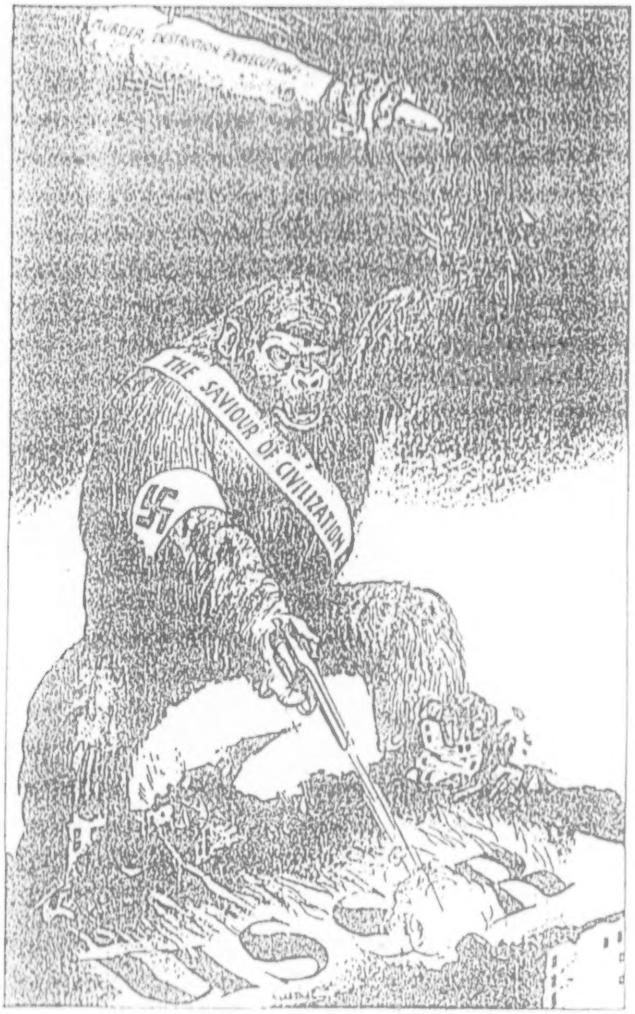

Zec in The London Daily Mirror

"Spreading the gospel"

Figure 12. *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1941

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# Visual Rhetoric: A Semiotic Evaluation of the Misrepresentation of a Subculture within the Myth of Lesbian Chic in Mainstream Advertising

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# Visual Rhetoric: A Semiotic Evaluation of the Misrepresentation of a Subculture within the Myth of Lesbian Chic in Mainstream Advertising

Visual imagery dominates advertising messages. A visual rhetoric is established as the viewer's perception of the advertising message is defined. Homoerotic images of women are appearing in mainstream consumer advertising giving credence to a phenomenon of "lesbian chic." Through a semiotic analysis this paper suggests that the meanings embedded in these advertising images have little to do with "lesbianism" per se and are more closely aligned with mainstream heterosexual pornography of women engaged in "lesbian" sex.

# Visual Rhetoric: A Semiotic Evaluation of the Misrepresentation of a Subculture within the Myth of Lesbian Chic in Mainstream Advertising

> We learn ourselves through women made by men.
> --Sheila Rowbotham, Woman's Consciousness,
> Man's World (Pollock, Missing Women, *The
> Critical Image*, 1990.)

## INTRODUCTION

Visual imagery dominates advertising messages. With constant bombardment of visual advertising our perception of what we "see" gives the false allusion of immediate understanding. Because we are so accustomed to being addressed by images, their total impact is sometimes not fully understood. Our "reading," or perception, of these images shapes our understanding of the visual message. Selection, organization, and interpretation are the stages of perception (Dwyer, Moore, 1994). However, since perception and meaning are intertwined, the viewers frame of reference affects perception. A visual rhetoric is established as the viewer's perception of the advertising message is defined.

The underlying problem in deciphering image meaning will always lie in understanding viewer context and frame of reference, which is dictated by historical context and cultural roots (Corbett 1965). What creates the homoerotic messages in the advertising images discussed in this paper is the visual sign system in our culture that connotes sexual innuendo. What confuses the message is the context in which the ad is presented. Usually this type of homoerotic imagery is usually seen in magazines like *Playboy*. However, when seen in a different type of magazine, the message and the intended or internal audience is confused. By placing homoerotic images in mainstream advertising the message reaches, and may influence, a wider audience.

Homoerotic images of women in film, television, and other media are hip, hot, and increasingly prevalent. Lately, these images are popping up in mainstream consumer advertising as well [see Figures 1-5]. While advertising is not shy about brandishing sexual sizzle and titillation, using homoerotic imagery to sell might be seen as somewhat stunning, given advertising's tendency to promote the ideal, along with its general reluctance to offend mainstream audiences. In recent Guess ads [Figures 1-3], two young, female models are seductively positioned with regard to each other and gaze invitingly at the viewer. Versace, no stranger to using hot beefcake in ads, features two naked women "spooning" amidst his Home Signature pillow collection [Figure 5]. In yet another Versace ad [Figure 4], the same two women are engaged in a provocative, semi-private gymnastics routine, clothed only in designer jeans (and white gloves). These are only a few instances of steamy "girl/girl" ads appearing in mainstream advertising that display the phenomenon of "lesbian chic."

At first glance, these images are relatively incongruent with the literature related to gay/lesbian representation in the media. Numerous voices have argued that portrayals of homosexuals in mainstream media have been relatively nonexistent. What few homosexuals seep through are, more often than not, demeaningly stereotypical and often pathological beings (Gross, 1991; Parish, 1993; Inness, 1997). Schulman notes a recent stereotype in which homosexuals are portrayed as "a privileged elite with more money and power than heterosexuals," contrary to data that indicate lesbian women and gay men earn less than their heterosexual counterparts (1998, pp. 18-20).

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that the meanings embedded in these advertising images have little to do with "lesbianism" per se. Methods of semiotic analysis will show that these images mirror those of women engaged in "lesbian" sex in mainstream heterosexual pornography. These images are powerful and become part of a system in and through which women, both lesbian and heterosexual, become socially constructed objects. Further, these ads function to tell women what they must do to market themselves as consumer goods designed to satisfy the desires of heterosexual males.

## LESBIAN CHIC IN ADVERTISING

Sexually suggestive images are an oft-used tool by American advertisers. Since the early nineteenth century advertisers have used images of women, and lately men, to sell everything from clothing to computers to ice cream to cars (Goodrum and Dalrymple, 1990). Recent analyses suggest that sexually oriented appeals account for anywhere from 8 to 40% of mainstream consumer advertising (Biswas, Olsen, and Carlet, 1992; Reichert, Morgan, and Callister, 1995; Soley and Reid, 1983; 1988). Obviously, sex is used to cut through the clutter, to titillate, to arouse, to excite, and to sell.

Generally, these appeals share at least two commonalities: Women are positioned as the object of desire, and sex is defined within a heterosexual space. Studies have shown that women are consistently stereotyped in advertising as either sex objects or housewives (Lazier-Smith, 1989). As objects of male desire, women's roles are reduced to decorative playthings, sex kittens, or the girl next door (Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992). These sexually oriented appeals are designed to instruct women how to be desirable to men, as adornments to enhance the attractiveness and appeal of the brand, or as the tantalizing prize for successful goal attainment. Women in these ads are there to be gazed upon and are, consequently, designed to be physically attractive, slender, curvaceous, and sexually enticing. These images are obviously designed to appeal to dominant heterosexual culture. Outside the alternative media, homosexuals are relatively invisible in mainstream advertising. These sexual appeals are designed to position women as the object of masculine desire.

Given the role of women in advertising, images of "lesbian chic" present a rather interesting exception to typical advertising conventions. Suggestive images of women appealing to other women may represent the site where counter-culture begins and hegemony ends.

From where do advertisers borrow the female homoerotic meaning present in these images? As van Zoonen (1994) notes, advertising relies heavily on cultural signifiers to construct meaning because ad exposure is typically passive and fleeting. This means ad creators coopt readily available cultural signifiers in an attempt to communicate their message.

Therefore, given the relative invisibility of homosexuals in advertising, we can ask what are some potential sources for these images? Typically, the media hasn't been benign in it's representation of minorities. This is especially true for sexual minorities. As discussed in the introduction of this paper, Gross (1991) argues that fringe groups such as sexual minorities are either excluded or portrayed in demeaning stereotypical ways. These stereotypes are either in terms of comic relief, a way of making it clear that the lead character is straight, or as deviants (Parish, 1993). Russo (1987) argues that slurs are tolerated against homosexuals in film that would not be tolerated when referencing other groups. Obviously, mainstream media doesn't provide many references pertaining to lesbians. Gross' argument that the images of distorted images of sexual minorities in the media is due in large part to the biases and values of those in power -- white, middle-class, heterosexual males -- suggests another potential source of lesbian images coopted in advertising: pornography.

Women in these ads are what Inness (1997) would describe as stereotypically heterosexual. They are typical boy-toy-blondes: slender, curvaceous, and hopelessly femme. Duncker (1995) also argues that lesbian representation in erotica is not "lesbian" at all but rather an attempt to control lesbian space.

## SEMIOTICS AND DECONSTRUCTION

*Semiotics* (or *semiology* as it was first called) derives from the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1907/1966). Saussure's work was extended and modified by French writer Roland Barthes (1957/1972) and Italian linguist Umberto Eco (1976).

Semiotics, according to Barthes, is the task of interpreting *signs.* For Barthes, visual signs in particular cry out for interpretation. Because they masquerade as straightforward and natural, beyond social force, visual signs especially are freighted with undetected ideological constructs that perpetuate and extend the status quo. Signs, according to Barthes, carry with them the *mythologies* of a culture. However, the mythic constructs carried by signs are not readily apparent and are all too easily overlooked. These mythic constructs dwell less with the denotative level and more with the connotative level. Eco states that "semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie" (1976, p. 7). Denotation, that which is on the surface, is seldom the problem. Connotation, however, works by stealth; the connotative potential of the socially constructed sign is hidden. The task of semiology is to deconstruct the sign so that lies may be brought to light.

Three terms are essential to semiotics: *sign, signifier,* and *signified.* The *sign* is composed of a *signifier* and a *signified.* For example, a simple picture of a blonde woman on a page can have many levels of meaning. The picture, in itself and prior to socially constructed meaning, is a *signifier.* On one level this picture could be thought of as "merely" denotative, a photographic re-presentation of a woman. Beyond being a re-presentation of a woman, however, social constructs are *signified.* In the dominant cultures of at least the United States, the image of a blond carries with it a whole series of connotations. We "know" that blondes are "dumb." We remember that "blondes have more fun." We think of Marilyn Monroe and the on-screen antics of her characters when we see the blonde woman. And when our thinking is less-than-clear, we are said to be having a "blonde moment." That which is *signified* by the image of the blond woman (the *signifier*) consists of all these constructs and more. The *sign* then is the combination of the visual image of the blonde (*signifier*) and the many connotations (the *signified*) that attach to the image of the blonde woman. Barthes, especially in some of his later work (1974/1974) maintained that an innocent denotation ("It's just a picture of a blonde woman!) only appears to be the first, the "natural" meaning. However, says Barthes, "denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so . . . it is ultimately no more than the *last* . . . the one which seems to both establish and to close the reading" (1974/1974, p.7). The *seems* is important here. The appeal to denotation is used to hide the ideological and hegemonic baggage inhering to connotation. It is to attempt to establish that the picture of the blonde is only that and nothing more, and it is to attempt to close off any deconstructive efforts. These appeals are essential in any attempt to forestall the inquiry that would expose how the sign perpetuates and extends the values of the status quo.

Barthes and Eco also show that any examination of signs is, of necessity, an examination of the system or systems to which the signs belong. No one sign can be looked at in isolation. As we look at a print advertisement, for instance, we cannot isolate one sign, such as *blonde hair*, from the other signs in the ad, nor the ad from other signs and systems of signs extant in the socially constructed world. The ad is a system of many signs embedded in other systems of signs that together operate with and upon one another "like an algebra," and a complex algebra at that (Barthes, 1957/1972, p. 17).

## THE SIGN SYSTEM OF THE LESBIAN CHIC AD

In all of the ads discussed in this paper, two female models are "joined" together. In Figure 1 (Guess belts), the models hold hands, and their joined hands rest on the breasts of one of the models. The lips of one model are slightly parted. Bellies and breasts are thrust out toward the viewer. Hair is tousled with the "just got out of bed" look. The models are locked in a sideways hug, the breasts of one pushed against the breasts of the other.

In Figure 3, the most prominent model has large, supple breasts accentuated by tight, minimal clothing. Most of the breasts of the model in the foreground are revealed, and the nipple is emphasized and compositionally placed in the focal point of the image. A cross rests directly above her breasts. The model in the back drapes her arms and legs over the model in front. The fingers of the hand in the foreground are spread open in a "V" shape. The models lean together, head against head.

The Versace jeans ad [Figure 4] features one model standing, raring back, the angle of her arms hiding her breasts. She lifts the legs and buttocks of the other model who cups her hands firmly over her own full, bare breasts. They gaze not at each other but toward the viewer. Hair is wild. Lips are full and prominent. The posture is provocative.

Perhaps the most tame image examined in this paper is the Versace ad in Figure 5. The female couple nest amidst Home Signature pillows. The models' eyes are closed. One model has parted lips, and the lips of the other are full and pouty. The women cuddle like a pair of spoons and are covered with pillows. Only their bare shoulders are revealed. Nudity must surely lurk beneath.

Even a verbal description of these signs should suggest that most common system of signs, the signified of which is *SEX*. Svelte, tall bodies; wild, blonde hair; full, parted lips; and thrusting, prominent breasts have long been recognized as signifiers that tell the observer that women are desirable objects, playthings, sex-kittens (Lambiase, Reichert, Morgan, Carstarphen, Zavoina, & Callister, forthcoming; Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo, 1992). The ads in this paper do not, however, give the viewer a lone woman as toy; the viewer is offered two women for the price of one. And, these women are positioned in a manner that Ellensweig (1992) would define as homoerotic. Although Ellensweig discusses the homoerotic image, the signifier, within the context of photography, it is directly applicable to advertising images. Homoerotic signifiers depict desire and affection between members of the same sex with an erotic tension that "lurk[s] like a phantom in the background" (p. 73). He goes on to say that homoerotic images aren't necessarily overtly sexual, but the erotic potential is present. What then is the *signified* of these homoerotic signifiers?

One is tempted to move quickly to conclude that what we have in these ads is "lesbian sex." But a semiotic analysis forces us to look at sign *systems*. Lesbian sex is a common element in both soft- and hard-core pornography. Women having sex with women is a standard narrative device for heterosexual titillation. Williams (1989) calls it the "girl/girl number." Lesbian sex in mainstream pornography is even listed as an important convention for stimulating male arousal in Ziplow's (1977) manual for world-be pornography producers, *The Film Maker's Guide to Pornography*. In addition, feminists have long held that such pornography is produced by males, distributed by males, and is primarily consumed for male pleasure (for review see Linz & Malamuth, 1993). As such, women are presented as sexual objects whose primary importance is wish-fulfillment for men, and men's ideas and men's perceptions of what sex should be like constitute the status quo. Further, research has shown that men find images of "lesbian erotica" arousing (Adams, Wright, & Lohr, 1996; Gillan & Frith, 1977). Thesepart signifiers rarely, if ever, signify the "girl/girl number" as anything more than a prelude to the heterosexual encore -- as constructed by the heterosexual male. This construct is documented by Eliason (1997) who found that college-aged males are tolerant and accepting of bi-sexuality in women. That "bi-sexuality" means the "girl/girl number" is made manifest by these males reporting a desire to date a woman who would be open to the possibility of a menage-a-trois with another woman.

Confirming this equation, Duncker, a lesbian feminist, argues that "lesbianism" in male-oriented, main-stream pornography is "a heterosexual spectator sport" (1995). She finds the separation between lesbian lives and the representation of lesbian sexuality in pornography to be unequivocal: "Narratives of all these erotic reviews insist that Lesbians are everywhere, that any woman can be a lesbian and that this is a simple sexual desire like any other" (p. 12). Inness (1997) finds that even in the editorial content of mainstream women's magazines, lesbianism is viewed as either accidental or as a simple sexual adventure. In this system, the lesbian is reduced to an object of sexual encounter. This sexual encounter is, again, for the benefit of the heterosexual male and his fantasy life. Inness argues that in the "landscape of women's magazines . . . the lesbian body frequently loses all association with real lesbians" (p. 58). The model/signifiers, she says, "fail to look like any lesbian I have ever encountered, although I recognize that some exist" (p. 65). Viewers are given "models who look stereotypically heterosexual pretending to be lesbians." What is signified by these images is "an implicit understanding that these are not 'real' lesbians." These sanitized lesbians become a domesticated commodity that offers the male viewer "titillation without threat" (pp. 65-66).

The gaze of the "lesbian" signifiers and the environments of the ads reinforce the offering. In most of the ads in this paper, both models together gaze out at the viewer with an invitation to join in on the fun. The models do not gaze at each other with anything close to understanding or shared intimacy that might be expected in a dyadic lesbian encounter. The gaze is accompanied by full, red lips that make the women seductive and seemingly eager to provide the third-party viewer with steamy sexual adventure. The environments of the ads are sparse and unidentifiable and provide a secluded space that isolates the two women for the pleasure of the viewer. Little text, outside of the designers' names, is visible to complicate the system of signs being presented. The hegemonic discourse, the "simple" offering of the "girl/girl number" for heterosexual male consumption, remains undetected. Ample space is created for the innocent reply that "they're just a couple of pretty girls."

Grover argues that the consistency with which *all* audiences can read signifiers intended for primarily male producers and consumers contrasts markedly with the limited ability of heterosexual audiences to interpret quite another set of images produced by lesbian-feminist photographers primarily for lesbian audiences (Grover). Images are judged against the world they reflect or reproduce; distort or falsify. The "real" is always present as the criteria against which images are assessed, a "real" which is never interrogated as itself a product of representation (Pollock 1985, p 203).

A gap exists between idealized women and reality. However, to a certain extent, identities are formed through such imageries of "high" culture and the media, including film, television, advertising, and pornography. These "images of women" have been denounced by some in the name of feminism. Yet they are difficult to disavow because of the potency of their formulations of femininity, their fascination, and their pleasures (Pollock 1985).

This cry of innocence can be well defended by pointing out that these are ads that promote products for women, and heterosexual women at that. But why the sexual innuendo? Conventional wisdom, of course, tells us "sex sells." Surely the message of the presentation is that if a woman purchases these designer products, some of the models' appeal will accrue to the buyer. But to what end? For the woman's self? Or for the attraction and ultimate pleasure of men? The kinship that the sign systems of these ads share with the "girl/girl numbers" proffered by soft- and hard-core pornography for consumption by heterosexual males makes clear that what we have here is, functionally, an instruction manual for women that advises women how to market themselves as consumer objects. "Here girls, this is how to make yourselves marketable to (heterosexual) men: buy these goods and you will be transformed into the ultimate porn fantasy of those hot heterosexual men. You too, girl, can achieve that ultimate success: to become a man's possession. And you will like it."

One could argue at this point that there is little difference between "lesbian chic" ads and those that feature a lone female model or a woman on the arm of a man. Indeed, these as well function as marketing manuals for women. And they are, by and large, placed in women's magazines that are themselves guides that instruct women, albeit indirectly, through connotation, in how to successfully offer themselves up as consumer goods. Yes, women are taught to objectify themselves in these lone-female and male-female sign systems. The difference between these and the "lesbian chic" ads is one of degree and perhaps one of kind. "Lesbian chic" ads serve to further the objectification process already in place, but they also publicly do what was formerly done in the semi-privacy of pornography -- they add lesbians to the public commodity offering. A difference of kind occurs in that, formerly, mainstream ads taught women that a relatively garden-variety of thin, girl-nest-door sexiness was the packaging necessary for the successful sale of one's self to a male. The "lesbian chic" phenomenon, however, publicly suggests, and in mainstream media, that one must somehow participate in the packaging portrayed in pornography. Gone now is any suggestion that something like "love" or "romance" might be included in the bargain. The pornographic woman is completely objectified, one in being with the images bought in "adult" bookstores and video arcades.

## OTHER READINGS

Signs, especially visual signs as Barthes pointed out, are subject to multiple readings depending on the systems in which they participate. In a series of focus groups conducted with separate groups of male and female college students, half of the women read the Guess Belt ad [Figure 1] as a sign of female resistance signifying independence and defiance of male domination. These women saw "lesbian" sex, or bisexual sex between two women, as a sign that women can now "do what they want." The sign systems of the ad offered the message that women are free to make their own decisions and are no longer subjugated to male definitions of female pleasure. Indeed, these young, heterosexual women interpreted these ads as signs of a "hip" resistance movement.

What of lesbians themselves? Dunker (1995) and Inness (1997) are clear that the female images in "lesbian chic" presentations do not accurately depict lesbians (nor many heterosexual women, for that matter). But as Schulman points out, "Lesbians . . . have spent lifetimes translating subtext and innuendo in order to have the normative pleasure experience of seeing themselves represented" (1998, p. 18). So, while "pseudo-lesbian images are being used to market to straights," lesbians are adept, from long practice, at personalizing non-lesbian images.

## CONCLUSION

Through this semiotic evaluation it is shown that "lesbian chic" ads present a system of signs that mirrors "lesbian" coupling in soft- and hard-core pornography that is produced for the sexual gratification of heterosexual males. The female signifiers in these ads and in pornography have little to do with the lived lives of real lesbians. The "lesbian chic" ads share one aspect in common with ads that feature a lone woman or a male/female dyad. Both ad types function as instructional manuals for women, telling them what they must do to market themselves to men. Women are taught to become objects of consumption. "Lesbian chic" shares in the sign system of heterosexual pornography, and thereby functions as hegemonic discourse that tells women that they must become like the pornographic image: a thing to be used, abused, and discarded.

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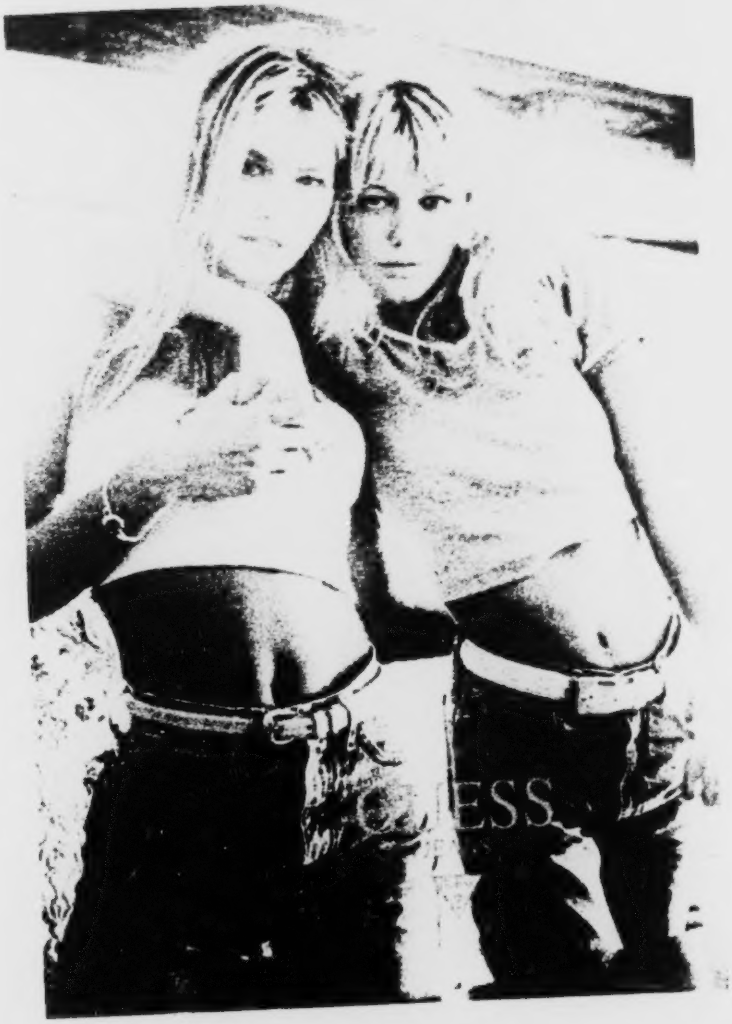

Figure #1

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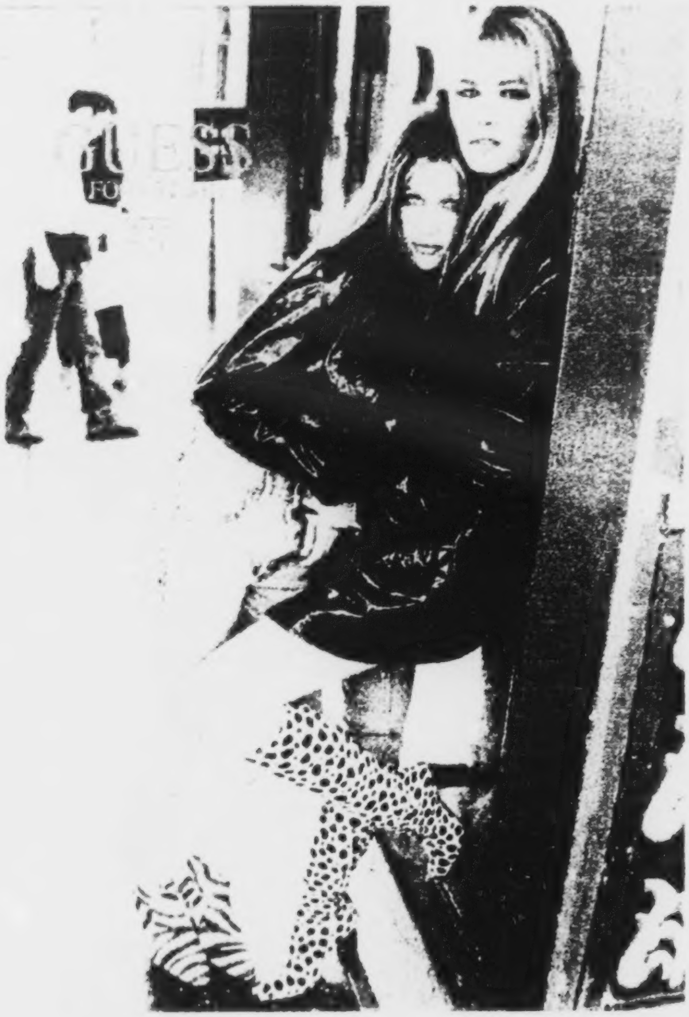

Figure #2

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Figure #3

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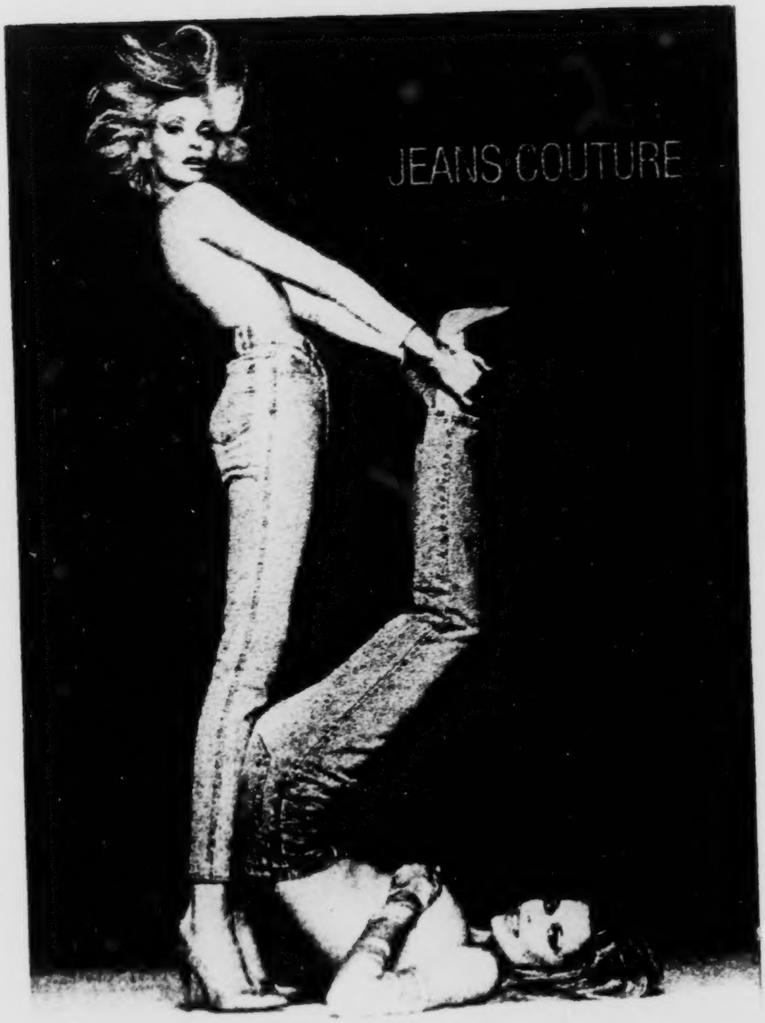

Figure #4

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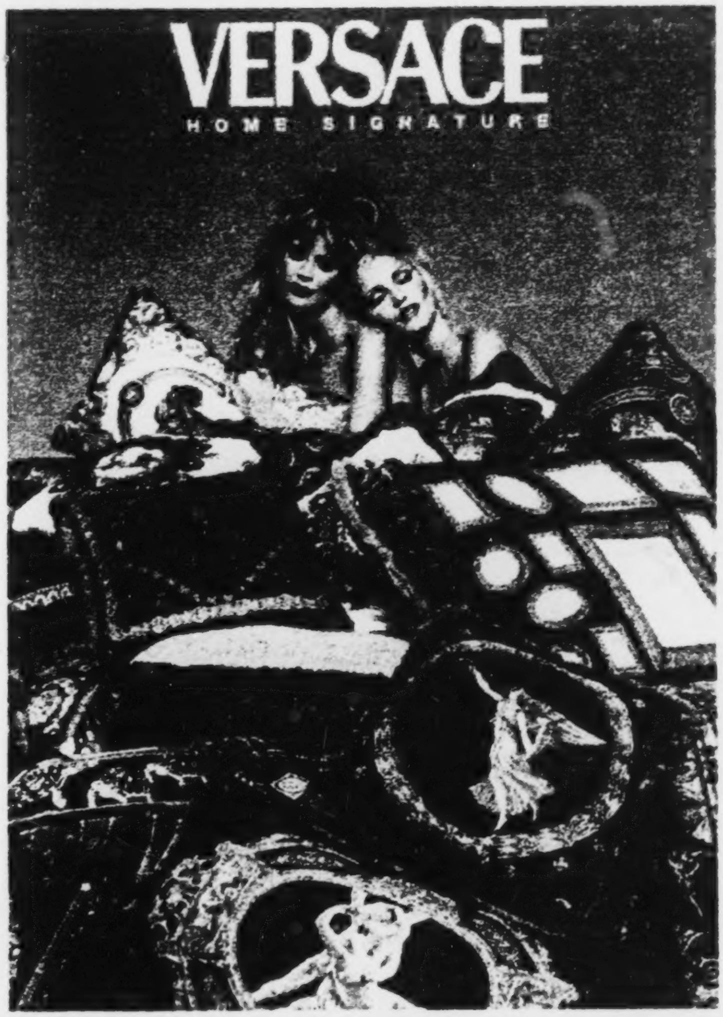

Figure #5

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# Readers' Perception of Digital Alteration and Truth-value in Documentary Photographs

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This is a baseline study on how readers of print news media accept digital imaging alterations and how much they trust digital documentary images. The purpose is to examine to what extent readers accept the postmodern ideas about truth and reality embedded in this new technology and to provide empirical basis for the making of guidelines and principles regarding the use of digitally altered photographs in documentary contexts. Survey and in-depth interviews were conducted to understand both patterns and rationales of readers' attitudes.

# Readers' Perception of Digital Alteration and Truth-value in Documentary Photographs

## Introduction

Anthropologists George Marcus and Michael Fisher (1986, p. 7-16) define postmodernism as "a crisis of representation," where traditional standards no longer apply. Marcus and Fisher (Ibid., p. 8) point out: "The crisis arises from uncertainity (*sic*) about adequate means of describing social reality" because the key feature of this moment "is the loosening of the hold over fragmented scholarly communities of either specific totalizing visions or a general paradigmatic style of organizing research." From the viewpoint of technology, Linda Andrea (1985, p. 15) expresses a similar view: "The postmodern experience is marked by the loss of mastery. The increasing complexity of technology makes it impossible for any one individual to understand very much about it even as it increasingly infiltrates all areas of life."

As an important part of social structure, technology can have a strong impact on people's daily lives and their understanding of the world. Digital technology, represented by the local area network (LAN), the 'digital set-top box' (DSB), the World Wide Web (WWW), the CD-ROM, desktop publishing, and digital video and digital still imaging, is revolutionizing the way information is being presented. It converts the content derived from any analog medium such as text, graphics, photos and data in the form of ink on paper, or audio and video on traditional tapes into the digital form, a way for people to store, transmit, transform, manipulate and present information in volumes and modalities that was only dreamed of before. Joining MTV, Disneyland, David Letterman, Sherrie Levine and the sheep Dolly, the phenomena that are thought to compose the postmodern typology of culture and imagination, digital imaging technology, as part of the ongoing digital revolution, is taking over photography and replacing it as a major way of visually representing the world in the print media industry.

Today, we are approaching a point at which almost all images that we see in our daily newspapers and news magazines are digitally recorded, transmitted and processed. As an industrial standard, digital imaging technology is being widely used on a daily basis in the United States not only by industry giants like *The National Geographic* magazine, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, but also by small newspapers like the *Columbia Missourian* and *Indiana Daily Student*. A recent study showed that digital imaging was almost ubiquitous in U.S. dailies whose circulations were more than 7,500. The study found that "only 5 papers out of 225 indicated no digital imaging use, 78.7% were 100% digital, and 94.7% used digital imaging for at least 90% of their images." (Russial and Wanta, 1998, p. 599) An earlier study showed that no newspaper had discontinued use of digital imaging once they had adopted it (Kelly, 1996).

Computers can already produce printed images that are indistinguishable in look and quality from traditional photographs. Digital imaging technology allows people to interfere with the structure of a photograph and change its contents pixel by pixel, thus allowing 'fake' photographs to be passed off as real ones. As Sawyer (1994) observed: "These days, it seems, if you can imagine it, you can image it." Manipulation of photographic images is not something new. What distinguishes digital imaging alterations from old styles of photographic manipulation is that manipulating images on a computer is now more effortless, more precise, less expensive, and hardly detectable. Digital imaging technology is a good example for illustrating Andrea's viewpoint that "the postmodern experience is marked by the loss of mastery,"—the mastery of the real in this case.

The modern era is marked by an investment in the corrosive power of truth. Documentary photographs have often been regarded as having the capacity, unique among the graphic media, to provide direct access to "truth." (Jussim, 1989, p. 145) The medium itself, as Sekula (1984a, p. 5) analyzes, is considered transparent, and the photograph is seen as a re-presentation of nature itself and as an unmediated copy of the real world. This trust in the photograph originates in the technological perception that photographs are, in some ways, 'fossilized light.'—a 'mirror with a memory' as characterized by Oliver Wendell Holmes—created by a chemical and mechanical process that captures a direct physical imprint of reality with not much significant intentional input involved. Critic James Hugunin (1984) suggests that documentary photography creates certain expectations of factual truth on the part of the viewer. When we look at a photograph, we assume that it has *not* been reworked and that it has faithfully depicted reality unless we have some clear indication to the contrary (Winick, 1997). Revealing truth, therefore, has become the paramount task for documentary photographers as well as journlists (Pippert, 1989, p. 3), and a criterion for distinguishing documentary from non-documentary (e.g. See Weinberger, 1996).

The trend of digital image manipulation has raised both academic and social concerns over the loss of truth-value in documentary photographs. The accepted "truth," authority, and authenticity of documentary photographs is being eroded and undermined bit by bit through a seamless process of digital retouching and editing. People today have kept asking: "Is photography any longer evidence of anything?" (Griffin, 1995, p. 21; Witte, 1994, p. 390) The prospect, according to Geoffrey Batchen (1994), is that, "increasingly, viewers will discard their faith in the photograph's ability to deliver objective truth, and that the medium of photography will thereby lose its power as a privileged conveyor of information."

With that said, so far, with digital imaging technology having been used in the print media industry for approximately 20 years, no scholars have bothered to ask readers about what they think about the appropriateness of digital imaging alterations. Are readers concerned about such alterations? Are they welcoming, or apathetic to them? We do not know. As Kelly (1996) pointed out, "the full impact of digital imaging technology on photography and on audience interpretation of photographic news reports is still in a state of flux." This is still the case today.

We can see studies on newspaper or magazine photo editors' attitudes and their tolerance toward digital image manipulation (Gladney, & Ehrlich, 1996; Reaves, 1995; Reaves, 1993; Davis, 1992). However, the study of readers cannot be replaced by the study on experts just as the observation of the sunlight cannot be replaced by the observation of the moonlight. Speaking for actual readers risks eliminating the variance of thinking among them.

To date, no industry wide standards have been accepted regarding what level of digital imaging alteration is within the boundaries of ethical journalism. How this new technology should be used by media greatly impacts how readers understand the world and understand what is real. This study intends to bring actual readers to the forefront of the research on the digital revolution in mass media. By exploring reader's acceptability of various digital imaging alterations, I want to determine to what extent the readers' truth concept has been influenced by the postmodern digital imaging technology. By filling in the research gap, I hope that this reader-response research will provide a solid empirical basis for the making of newsroom guidelines and principles in terms of digital images use, in which I believe readers as receivers of digital images should and must have a say.

## Literature review

By running searches on different databases, I found hundreds of articles about digital images. However, I found no studies on digital image readers. The four articles that I will use here have addressed reader perception issues and media professionals' perceptions of digital imaging alteration, from which I have drawn sources for my research questions, hypotheses and methods.

Edwin Martin's 'On Photographic Manipulation' (1991) explored moral complications in determining standards for manipulation that center on a concept of deception and credibility as computer technology develops and elements in photographs can more easily be rearranged with undetectable changes. Martin characterized manipulation in terms of departures from accepted, expected standards used in a specific context such as *The National Enquirer*, *People Magazine* or *The New York Times*. He added that what counted as standard practice and what counted as manipulation varied with presentational context. "Digital retouching may deceive the newspaper reader, not the esthete, and therefore be morally wrong in the hands of the news photographer though not in the hands of the artist." (Martin, 1991, p. 159)

When answering why digital image manipulation had been perceived by some journalistic professionals as being ethically or morally questionable, Martin (Ibid.) wrote:

> We presume that deception, in general, is morally wrong; and it is presumed that certain kinds of photographic manipulations will cause viewer deception. Thus those manipulations are morally wrong. The link between manipulation and deception makes the issue an ethical one. A photograph manipulated without any warning or sign to the viewers might create false expectations, thus deceiving them.[1]

Martin pointed out that there had been relatively less effort made to discover the expectations of a paper's readership about photographs, although researchers had spent a great deal of time discovering policies, attitudes, and expectations of editors and others who presented news photographs. Since different newspapers or news magazines, or different sections of a newspaper (e.g., the front section and leisure section) are distinct presentational contexts that prompt different viewer expectations, Martin called for close study of viewer expectations. To Martin, credibility was largely a question of the publication's meeting the expectations of its audience, and policies were helpless in ensuring credibility unless the expectations were known to the policymakers. Martin believed that readers did not expect truth from a publication so much as they expected good faith. "And good faith is a question of meeting expectations. In fact, most readers expect the publication to give them a chance to decide what is true, to show rather than to tell." (Ibid., p. 162) Martin concluded:

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[1] Some studies support Martin's argument. For instance, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which is known for publishing the photo of Olshwanger and his wife, in which a Coke can was digitally removed, later also stated: "If a picture is altered for a necessary reason, readers must be informed." (Christians, *et al*, 1983, p. 55) The Associated Press Managing Editors Association has stated that any (non-AP) photo that is altered should have a disclaimer caption (e.g., "altered," "composite," "retouched," "photographic re-creation," "photo dramatization." (Davis, 1992) However, some other studies found that newspaper editors and TV news directors alike tended to mildly oppose the notion that if a photo has been manipulated, for whatever reason, the audience should be informed of the fact (Black, 1992; Black, Steele & Barney, 1995). (I am expecting to find out how readers look at this issue.)

> If credibility is to be established, it will have to be by character, by having clearly articulated policies that are known to the audience and are adhered to. In this way, there will be less chance of viewer deception through manipulation and less chance of unethical conduct (Ibid. 163).

Martin's points can be summarized as follows: digital image manipulations could be acceptable, but we need to study readers' expectations in different presentational contexts so as to make a manipulation not exceed a specific reader expectation, and readers have the right to know the manipulations done in a medium. These arguments will be tested in my study.

Shiela Reaves, an established researcher in the field of digital imaging studies, has several studies that are of great value to my study though her research objects were all photo editors instead of readers. In her "What's Wrong with this Picture? Daily Newspaper Photo Editors' Attitudes and their Tolerance toward Digital Alteration," Reaves surveyed 511 visual editors from different daily newspapers of different circulation sizes in the nation. Her research questions were: "What do visual editors at daily newspapers think about specific kinds of computer editing changes? How much manipulation will visual editors tolerate? Is there any kind of national consensus?" (Reaves, 1993, p. 132)

Editors were asked to look at a four-page visual insert that contained 15 different photographs altered on the computer. For 11 of the 15 questions there was a clearly marked original image and next to it was the altered image with a brief description of what element was altered. These 11 questions were asked to test visual editors' tolerance for computer editing changes in "content" like moving or removing elements, and tolerance for computer editing changes in terms of technical aspects like darkening or blurring the background. The other four images were used to test editors tolerance for computer changes like combining elements from different sources into one image. The editors were then asked, "Do you agree with the computer editing change?" A five-point scale recorded the reaction from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*.

Reaves found that these photographic editors were very critical of any kind of digital alteration. Except for the traditional practice of printing (burning and dodging), they were strongly intolerant of digital alteration of the specific photo examples. At least 50 percent consistently strongly disagreed with 14 of the 15 examples of digital alteration." Reaves also found that photojournalists generally accepted as standard practice such techniques as cropping, dodging (lightening), and burning in (darkening) the print (See similar findings in Martin, 1991 and Steffens, 1992); however, they objected to dropping out backgrounds, flipping images in a photograph, using airbrushes to remove or add objects, or cutting and pasting photos. Reaves also found some disturbing facts that my study will test on readers. She wrote:

> Among the editors who did show more tolerance toward computer alterations of photographs, there are some discernable characteristics. Among these attributes were: having less

> familiarity with the technology; ... having no background in photojournalism; participating in less professional development activity; not having a college degree; being older than 35; ... (Ibid., p. 152).

Since there is no digital image reader-response research so far, these findings quoted here later became the hypotheses of my study.

In her 1995 article 'The Vulnerable Image: Categories of Photos As Predictor of Digital alteration,' Reaves used theoretical models from semiotics discussed in critical studies to explain why computer technology was sharpening pre-existing attitudes among editors toward photojournalism that are creating ethical dilemmas with digital photography, and why newspaper editors would seldom allow the digital alteration of photographs they perceived to be news photos, but would allow extensive digital alteration of photographs they perceived to be illustrations. Based on a semiotic continuum of photo categories for newspaper editors: spot news—feature photo—photo illustrations, Reaves (1995, p. 709) hypothesized,

> Newspaper editors will disagree most strongly with the digital alteration of spot news photographs, but find the most agreement with the digital alteration of photo illustration. Their attitude toward feature photos should fall somewhere in between. Spot news photos are clear examples of the denotative, natural sign-event, while photo illustrations are clear examples of the highly connotative, symbolic sign-event.

Reaves found that for all nine questions a continuum emerged showing editors being the least tolerant of a particular computer alteration in a "spot news photo," more tolerant of the same alteration in a "feature photo," and the most tolerant of the same alteration in a "photo illustration." The results supported the hypotheses. This study by Reeves helped me contextualize the questions in my questionnaire.

In another study (1989a), Reeves examined some of the ethical considerations in magazine editing. She began a dialogue where editors from the diverse arena of consumer magazines could start to confront some of their feelings about how, when and why they might use digital imaging technology to alter photographs. The paper examined consumer magazines only, which, Reaves thought, had the incentives to use the new technology.

Reaves found, magazine editors were unanimous in their refusal to alter news photos; however, news editors did not consider that digitally cloning backgrounds to fit a layout or cover was substantial alteration. Feature photos, however, were an area of debate. Editors split in their initial reaction as to whether to remove telephone wires in a scenic feature picture. Editors of the news editorial magazines, who were extremely conservative in altering photographs, were against removing telephone wires in a scenic photograph. Editors of specialized magazines would remove telephone wires for esthetic reasons.

Reaves found that some editors were concerned about readers reaction to this new technology. For instance, the former art director of *The New York Times*, Diana La Guardia, asked: "Are they [readers] going to understand that an art photographer has the liberty to create something that is not real or are they going to think 'My God, what is this magazine going to do?" (*sic*) In this study, Reaves also found that, although the editorial philosophy of a magazine might dictate how far a magazine can manipulate photos, many readers still take photographs literally. Reaves asked at the end of the paper: "Do readers make the distinctions between publications?"

## Methodology

### 1. Research questions

In spite of the fact that the digital imaging technology has been used in the media for around 20 years and that it has become an industrial standard, it is doubtful that many people are aware of this digital revolution that is changing people's understanding of what is real. I would like to know what kind relation there would be between reader awareness of the media's use of digital images and their acceptance of digital image alterations. I presumed that people's acceptance of such alterations could be related to their age, education, photographic experience, digital imaging experience, computer literacy, media exposure frequency and breadth. Manipulated digital documentary photographs appear to be both documentary truth and documentary fiction. This kind of photographic experience could change many readers' attitudes toward documentary photographs serving as a conveyor of truth about reality. I would like to know how understanding of truth is related to confidence in the evidential function of documentary photographs.

Based on literature review, here are my major research questions:

1. Are readers aware that most of today's photographs in print media are digitally processed?

2. How much do readers accept as appropriate different kinds of computer editing change to the content and to the technical aspects of a photograph?

3. Do readers distinguish between three types of photographs: hard news photos, feature photos and photographic illustrations in terms of digital image uses?

4. Do readers feel the need to be informed of a digital imaging alteration?

5. What does "truthful representation" mean to them?

6. Do readers think that a digital documentary image can serve as a piece of evidence in a court room?

7. What are readers' biggest concerns about digital imaging alteration in newspapers and in news magazines?

8. What principles or guidelines do readers think that editors should rely on to decide whether to use digitally altered images?

## 2. Hypotheses

With the lack of data from prior studies of digital image readers, the findings in Reaves' 1993 study became the natural reference for my hypotheses. As quoted above, Reaves (1993) found that editors who showed more tolerance toward computer alterations of photographs tended to have less familiarity with the technology, no background in photojournalism, no college degree, and be older than 35. Reaves did not provide explanations to those findings, some of which may seem counterintuitive when I locate her findings into my framework. For instance, older editors tend to tolerate digital imaging alterations—a postmodern phenomenon—more than younger people who have grown up in the postmodern era. In other words, it seems like saying that older editors are more postmodern than younger people in their attitudes toward such alterations. The complexity of explaining such an age-related finding lies in the fact that we do not know if younger people who have grown up in the postmodern age are naturally more postmodern in thinking than older people. No prior studies have been found to show us that this is the case. With such a complexity in mind, I took Reaves' findings as they are and tentatively regarded them as the hypotheses for my reader-response research.

After all is said, here are my five hypotheses:

1. Reader's education is positively correlated with their acceptability of digital imaging alterations.

2. Reader's media exposure frequency and breadth are negatively correlated with their acceptability

of digital imaging alterations.

3. Reader's photography and digital imaging experiences are supposed to be negatively correlated with their acceptability of digital imaging alterations.

4. Reader's computer literacy is positively correlated with their acceptability of digital imaging alterations.

5. Reader's age is positively correlated with their acceptability of digital imaging alterations.

The $\alpha$ value, which determines the size of the region of rejection is 0.5.

## 3. Methodology— survey and in-depth interviews

Based on my literature review, this study used a mail survey and in-depth interviews. The use of a survey was intended to reveal a general pattern of readers' attitudes toward digital imaging alteration and ideas about the truth-value in documentary photographs in the digital era. The concept of a total survey design raised in Fowler's book *Survey Research Methods* (1993, p. 142) helped me in designing the whole survey and made me better understand how to report the relevant details of all aspects of the data collection effort that impinge on the error level of the data.

Since no prior studies of this topic were available, I borrowed some question design ideas used by Reaves in her 1993 study of photo editors' attitudes and their tolerance toward digital imaging alteration. The pilot tests of my survey questionnaire, which, at first, closely imitated Reaves' design, demonstrated that questions about different types of manipulation should be contextualized. In other words, respondents may have different attitudes toward the same kind of manipulation in different types of photos such as hard news photos, feature photos and photographic illustrations. A respondent may circle *Strongly Disagree* for a type of alteration with a hard news situation in mind. However, for a feature story situation or a photographic illustration situation, s/he could have a totally different answer. Therefore, in my questionnaire, I contextualized readers' answers to each question.

For the very first 17 of the total 36 questions, respondents were asked to provide their opinions about some typical types of computer editing changes to digital images for typical reasons[2] that had appeared in newspapers and news magazines. In the pre-set answers, there were four circumstances:

A = Hard news photo.
B = Feature photo.
C = Photographic illustration.
D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances.

Respondents were instructed to circle all the circumstances under which they thought they could accept as appropriate. Otherwise, s/he should circle D. What I was interested in was the acceptance rate for each type of photo in each question. By subtracting the percentage of D with 100%, I could find out how many readers *accepted* a particular example of alteration in percentage. I was also interested in the acceptability of each example of alteration. Acceptability was defined as the total number of circles each question got from A to C. If a respondent circled D, the acceptability for that question was 0. If the respondent circled A and B and C, then, the acceptability for that question was 3. Therefore, the range of acceptability was from 0 to 3. The higher the figure was, the higher the acceptability was. Acceptance rate reflects the total number of people who accepted a kind of alteration. It is acceptability's job to show the rich variance of readers' acceptance among three types of photos.

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[2] The pilot test showed that respondents got confused as to why a specific alteration was done if a reason was not given. On the other hand, I have noticed that, if a reason *is* given, a respondent might approve or disapprove of the reason instead of the type of alteration although the question stated clearly "In which of the following situations would you accept this computer editing change?" It seems that this "double-barrel" situation is problematic. However, for each type of alteration, I have given a typical reason. For instance, in Question 5, an editor usually decides to do reverse-cropping to fit the image to a required size. A specific alteration is caused by a specific reason. Therefore, I would argue that a decision of accepting or not accepting a type of alteration made on the basis of the typical reason behind a specific type of alteration is not only, to some extent, an informed decision but also qualifies as a valid answer.

Nine in-depth interviews were conducted after the survey was completed to understand why the respondents answered the survey questions the way they did, what differences they saw in the different examples, and how they understood digital imaging alteration in documentary contexts. The data collected from the post-survey interviews were expected to explain, illustrate, and cross-examine the results obtained from the survey so as to cut deep into readers' mind to understand their thinking pattern.

### 4. Selection of study participants

Ideally, this study can draw participants nationwide so as to extend the conclusions to the whole country. Nevertheless, it is well known that a national survey with a random sample based on a reliable list of desirable readers is both expensive and time-consuming. Given my limited time and funding, a national survey was out of the question. As a result, I localized my survey.

I chose my sample in Bloomington, Indiana, where I am studying. Bloomington has one local newspaper *The Herald Times*. *USA Today* and news magazines like *Newsweek* and *Time* are also available. Local residents have access to different kinds of newspapers and magazines through their own subscriptions, supermarkets, bookstores, independent vending machines, more than seventy Indiana University libraries, the Monroe County Public Library, many other town libraries, the Internet and so on.

The population of the Bloomington City, a college town, was estimated to have a generally high education level. In order to get a mixed population of readers with different levels of education, I included the residents from the surrounding small towns and rural areas in the vicinity of Bloomington. As a result, the sample frame based on a city directory contained roughly 55,000 residents.

I drew a systematic random sample of 700 participants from the city directory. The participants were instructed to self-select on the basis of the following three requirements: 1. must be at least 21 years old; 2. has read newspapers and/or news magazines in the last thirty days at least once; and 3. is the person who has most recently had a birthday in the household if there is more than one person living at this address. Otherwise, the receiver of the questionnaire was requested to give the questionnaire to the person living at this address who met the above requirements. All the nine in-depth interview participants were selected from the survey participants on the basis of their answers, especially their answers to the three open-ended questions at the end of the survey questionnaire.

I was fully aware of the limitation that I could not generalize my conclusions to the national population with a local survey. However, I mean to raise the question of whether my results might be generalizable more widely, and I also suggest that further studies be done in different places with different samples to see if my findings hold across space. As Fowler (1993, p. 143) points out: "It is fairly rare to have a perfect sample frame that gives every member of the population that the researcher wants to study a known chance of selection. Whom to sample truly is a decision that cannot be evaluated out of context."

## Findings

### 1. Response rate

Of all the 700 copies of questionnaire mailed out, I received 158 completed questionnaires in total. According to the record of my follow-up phone calls, 219 mails were never received. Therefore the adjusted response rate was 33%.[3] As Singletary notes, in mail surveys, returns of 30 or 40 percent are common (1994, p. 148). The response rate of this study is no better though every possible effort was made to improve it. The record of my follow-up phone calls showed that those phone calls boosted the response rate by at least 5%. Since the response rate was comparatively low, a response bias was potentially present.

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[3] According to Fowler (1993, p. 39), units like vacant houses, telephone numbers that are not working or that do not serve nonresidential units, and households where no eligible person resides should be omitted in calculating response rates.

According to Wimmer and Dominick,

> Regardless of how good the response rate is, the researcher is responsible for examining any possible biases in response patterns. Were females more likely to respond than males? Older respondents more likely than minorities? A significant lack of response from a particular group might weaken the strength of any inferences from the data to the population under study (1994, p. 133).

By checking my data, I found that 47% female and 53% male participated the survey. This rate is close to being equal. This result shows that the gender of the participants was not much affected by the fact that the name of a household registered in a city directory is usually a male name. The ages of the respondents also showed a fairly normal curve. With ages 21 to over 70, most respondents' ages fell between 41 and 50. Therefore, in spite of the low response rate, I would argue that the respondents basically represented the sampled population in terms of age and gender. Nevertheless, in the absence of solid evidence to indicate external validity, I tend to be cautious in claiming the validity of any conclusions derived from this study to the population studied.

Before I conducted the survey, I was concerned about whether I would have enough readers willing to participate in my in-depth interviews. To my surprise, 39% of the survey respondents expressed that they were willing to take a follow-up interview. As a result, I had freedom to select the kind of people I needed to interview. In total, I contacted 9 selected survey participants who were willing to be in my interviews. All of them were, eventually, interviewed. The response rate for follow-up interviews was 100%.

### 2. More demographic information about the respondents

It was found that most respondents came from two large groups in terms of education. They either had received an undergraduate degree or at least had taken some undergraduate courses (43.3%), or had received a graduate degree or had taken some graduate courses (41.4%). Only 15.3% of the respondents had only completed high school or achieved lower educational levels. Serious newspapers such as national newspapers *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* or local newspaper *The Herald Times* was most read (88%). Next most read were serious news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek* (69%), "infotainment" magazines such as *People* and *Sports Illustrated* (42%), and documentary magazines such as *The National Geographic*, *Life*, and *Reader's Digest* (36%). The least readers read tabloids such as *Spy*, *Star* or *National Enquirer* (10%), which frequently carry digitally altered images on their front pages. Interestingly, it was also found that almost half of the respondents (49% ) did not watch tabloid TV programs that also heavily use digital editing techniques. Most of the other 51% respondents (36%) watched TV tabloid programs 1 to 2 days in a week if they watched any. 81% of the respondents read newspapers every day or almost every day. In comparison, respondents' magazine reading frequencies were greatly decreased and irregular.

Half of these respondents used a computer either in study or work more than three times a day. However, 14% of them never used a computer. It was found that the higher a respondent's educational level, the more s/he would use a computer (r=.24; p<.05). On the other hand, the older a respondent is, the less s/he would use a computer (r=0.32; p<.05). No significant difference was found between man and woman in terms of computer use frequency (r=0.013; p>0.05).

As far as computer literacy is concerned, only 8.3% of the respondents claimed that they knew nothing about the computer. 80.3% of them claimed to be able to do word processing such as typing and used Microsoft Word or WordPerfect, and 76.4% were able to use the Internet such as sending email and surfing the web. It seems that nowadays almost every person who can use a computer is online. The percentage of those who possess advanced computer knowledge such as using graphics software, constructing web pages with HTML or using programming software, drastically dropped down to 32%, which looked reasonable.

Over half of the respondents (63%) had never taken any photography classes, and only a quarter of them had taken a basic level photography class(es). In spite of the fact that 38% of the respondents had no digital image experience at all, around half of the respondents (54%) had heard of digital images, seen somebody else processed digital images or even could process digital images him/herself.

### 3. Preliminary findings about readers' knowledge and understanding of digital imaging

It was found that the readers' ability to distinguish hard news photos and photographic illustrations was much higher than their ability to distinguish hard news photos and feature photos and the ability to distinguish feature photos and photographic illustrations, which were more or less the same. Around one third of the readers claimed that they could not distinguish any types of photos when reading print news media.

60% of the readers surveyed said that they were aware of the fact that currently most photographs published in newspapers and news magazines were digitally processed though not necessarily altered. However, equally significant was the finding that 40% of them were still not aware that the digital imaging technology had been used by the media industry for around twenty years. With or without coincidence, 38.2% of the readers claimed to have no digital imaging experience. They could not create any digital images, and they even had never heard of digital imaging.[4]

When asked if they agreed with the opinion that a photo on the cover of a documentary magazine like *Time* or a documentary photo album like *A Day in the Life of America* is an artistic and promotional presentation, thus, digital retouching of the cover photo is OK, over half of the readers (57%) circled "Strongly agree" or "Somewhat agree," and about one third of the readers (31%) circled the opposite. Obviously, most readers would prefer to provide media professionals an artistic license or more leeway to handle cover photos, which oftentimes turn out to be composite images (I will soon talk about what composite images are).

---

[4] This similarity of the percentages, again, indicated a good internal validity and internal reliability of the study.

I noticed that readers may decide whether to accept a kind of alteration by looking at the motivation behind the alteration. I not only designed a couple of comparison examples such as Question 1 and Question 2, which both involved in the change of tonality but for different reasons, and Question 16 and Question 17, which both combined two persons from two different images but with different reasons. I also asked readers to decide whether they could accept the digital removal of a Coke can in the news photo on the introduction page of the questionnaire under different potential circumstances such as aesthetical (the Coke can is distracting), editorial (The Coke can is irrelevant to the theme), economic (doing no free ad for the Coca Cola Co.), ethical (showing the gentleman celebrating his winning of an award with a Coke instead of champagne will embarrass him), and political (the head of the Coca Cola Co. is running for the President of the U.S. as a Republican candidate and showing the Coke can in this front-page photo would suggest the newspaper's un-neutral position). As a result, editorial reason was the most accepted, followed by economic, aesthetic,

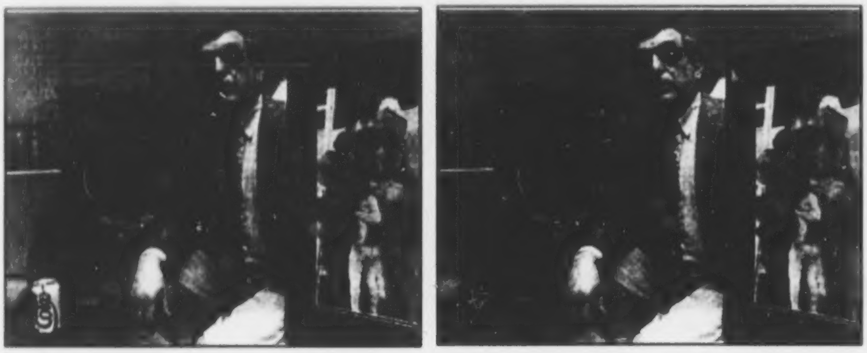

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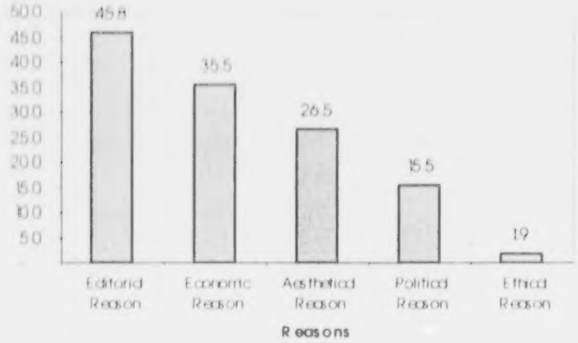
Chart 1 Acceptance Rates of A Digital Imaging Alteration for Different Reasons



political and ethical reasons. Since this is only one example of alteration, the result could be different from example to example. I believe this could also become one way of designing the questionnaire to run a similar study. I would suggest that more studies be done along this line.

### 4. The pattern of acceptability of digital imaging alterations in three types of photos

I was eager to find out if digital imaging alterations were increasingly acceptable to the respondents from hard news photos through feature photos to photographic illustrations. By running the general linear model ANOVA for repeated measure on the acceptability for each type of photos across 17 examples of alteration, the $F_{obt}$ value was 94.47, $p<.05$. The mean acceptability and confidence interval for each group were

| | |
|---|---|
| hard news photo: 0.15 | $0.11 \le \mu \le 0.19$ |
| feature photo: 0.39 | $0.35 \le \mu \le 0.43$ |
| photographic illustration: 0.55 | $0.51 \le \mu \le 0.59$ |

First, this ANOVA calculation tells us that there was significant difference between at least one pair of different types of photos. Second, the confidence intervals show no overlapping among the three means. That means, the acceptability of alteration in hard news photos was significantly different from that in feature photos, and that in feature photos was significantly different from that in photographic illustrations. The scatter plot of the mean of each acceptability could give us a better sense of difference (See Chart 2).

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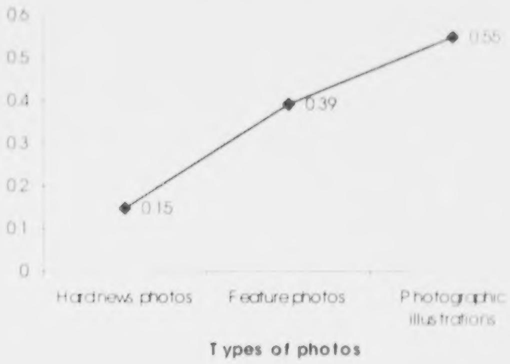
Chart 2 Acceptability of Digital Imaging Alterations in Three Types of Photos



It is obvious, the respondents did accept digital imaging alterations progressively from hard news photos through feature photos to photographic illustrations. This finding about readers is the same as the finding in Reaves' 1995 study of editors.

By looking at the percentage of "D" circled in each example, we can reversely find out how many readers accepted the alteration in each example (acceptance rate). After correlating the acceptability and the acceptance rate of digital imaging alterations across the 17 examples, I found that these two variables were positively correlated with each other (Pearson R=0.92). This high correlation provided evidence to the internal validity of measuring the acceptance rate and acceptability.

### 5. Responses to different categories of alteration

The first 17 questions of the questionnaire containing 17 examples of alteration, sequentially, belong to three large categories of alteration: *technical alteration* (Questions 1-5), *content alteration* (Questions 6-13) and *composite images* (Questions 14-17). Again, this idea of categorization of alterations was borrowed from Reaves' 1993 study.

### Technical alterations

A technical alteration does not change the internal structure of a photograph. What is changed is the way of presenting certain information. One exception is that, sometimes, a certain element, usually the

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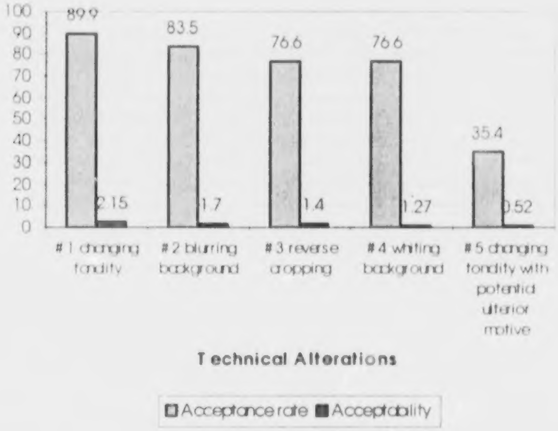
subject of a photograph, is cut out of the background to be presented solely by itself because the editor wants to emphasize the element. Traditionally, a darkroom technician executes technical changes like changing the tonality of a photograph, cropping a photograph, or removing the dust or a defect from a photograph. With digital technology, some new possibilities were imported into this profession such as reverse cropping (extending the border of a photograph by copying and pasting the elements by the original border to make the photograph look either wider or taller) and changing the depth of field (making either the background or the foreground, or both, blurrier or clearer). With all these done, the internal relationship between or among the elements in a photograph remains unchanged. If not dropping out the background, you still see the elements that you used to see in the unaltered photo; the distance between element A and element B, for instance, remains the same though the tonality of element A might be a little brighter or element B might look a little blurrier.

Chart 3: Acceptance Rate and Acceptability of Technical Digital Imaging Alterations



Five examples included in this group contain both traditional alterations and alterations made possible only by digital technology. I have rearranged the order of the original questions used in my questionnaire by acceptance rate in a descending order. Chart 3 shows that the acceptance rates for all examples are very high (over 75%) except for Example #5.

**Technical Example #1** (Question 1) described its alteration by stating

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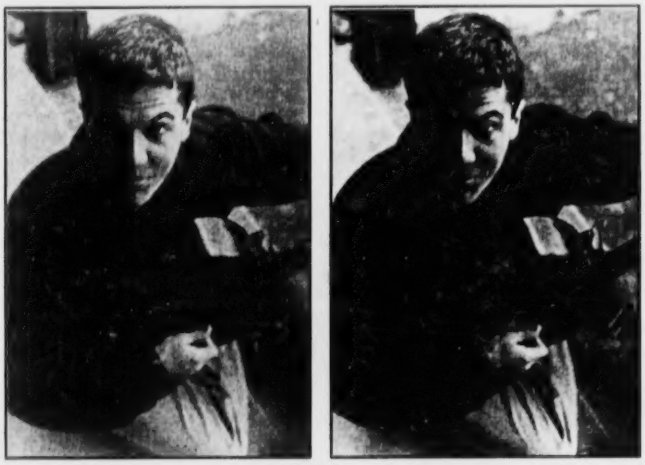
*In the right image, the tones of the background and the subject were adjusted to make the picture more printable in the newspaper. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 62.7% |
| B = Feature photo. | 79.7% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 72.2% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 10.1% |
| Acceptability | 2.15 |



Adjusting the tonality of a photograph is a traditional darkroom practice which is intended to improve the printing quality of the photograph in a newspaper or magazine. As an industrial norm, this kind of practice has been widely accepted by the media professionals. Reaves' 1993 study showed that 86.3% of the surveyed editors approved this kind of computer change. In my study, 62.7% of the readers accepted this kind of most basic alteration for hard news photos, and 89.9% of all respondents (100-10.1%) expressed that they could accept it in one way or another. Actually, this general acceptance rate is the highest of all the 17 questions, which is the way it should be. The high acceptability of this example (2.15) tells us that almost all respondents circled at least C and B, and some A, B and C. Reaves' rationale for raising this question was to test a possible phobia about editing photos with a computer. I believe both of our findings suggested that respondents were not simply rejecting editing techniques *because* they were done on a computer.

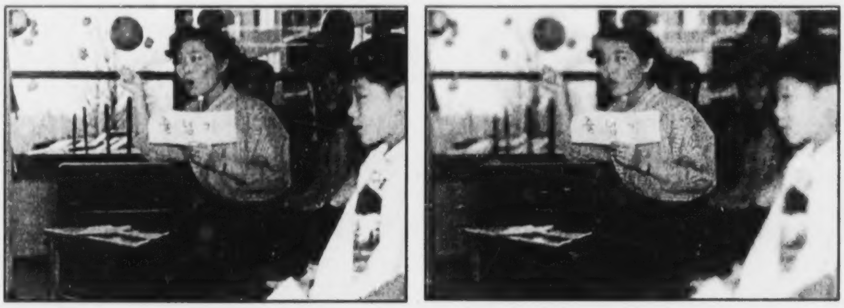
Changing the tonality of an image for better printing quality is an entry-level alteration in print media.

However, many readers said loud and clear: "Stop there!" Reader #22, who occasionally accepted alterations in photographic illustrations but rarely in feature photos or hard news photos, said in his answer to an open-ended question: "It is OK to adjust the colors [tonality] for print in a mag [magazine], news paper, etc. but only if they will appear close to what the original image was."

**Technical Example #2** (Question 3) described its alteration by stating:

*In the right image, both the background and the foreground were blurred to emphasize the teacher. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 31.6% |
| B = Feature photo. | 68.4% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 69.6% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 16.5% |
| Acceptability | 1.7 |



Digital technology has extended the boundary of traditional photo editing. Changing the existing depth of field of a photograph is one of them. By changing the depth of field, the subject of a photograph can either be better put in context or be emphasized. Think of it another way. The photographer could have used a bigger aperture opening at the time of taking the picture to give a smaller depth of field, which is like the case in the altered image. This kind of alteration is exactly based on the assumption that something actually happened or could have happened but did not show in the picture. Digital technology enables a photographer or an editor to shift the selection of depth of field (actually, some other selections such as the physical position and the moment of taking the picture, the focal length of the lens, the use of filter, etc.) from before the picture was taken to after the picture is on the screen.

For this kind of technical alteration, 83.5% of the respondents said "yes." This acceptance rate is still pretty high compared to Technical Example #1. One reader said that this alteration did not seem to have editorialized to change the content of the picture. However, the respondents did not wish to have this kind of alteration applied to hard news photos (34%). Most of them (68-70%) tolerated it in feature photos and photographic illustrations, and did not treat these two types of photos in a different way because of the alteration. In terms of acceptability, almost all respondents circled C and majority of them circled B and C.[5] Reaves' editors seemed stricter (23.3%) in taking this kind of alteration than my readers.

**Technical Example #3** (Question 5) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the right border of the image was extended by copying and duplicating part of the same image to fit the image to a required size. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 23.4% |
| B = Feature photo. | 53.8% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 63.3% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 23.4% |
| Acceptability | 1.41 |

Thanks to the stamp tool in Photoshop,[6] editors today can increase the size of a photograph by

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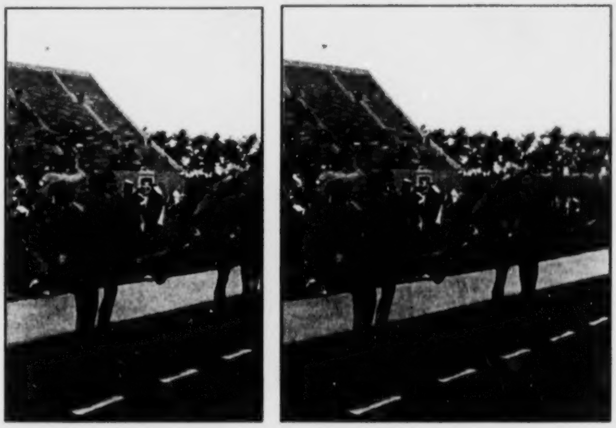
[5] I have demonstrated in Technical #1 and #2 examples how to interpret the acceptability figure. I will leave the interpretation of most of the acceptability figures in the next 15 examples to you the reader.

[6] Photoshop is the brand name of a graphics program produced by Adobe Co. It has been widely used both by media professionals and amateurs to process digital images.



reverse cropping it. As a result, the editor does not need either to skew or stretch the photo or to rearrange the texts around the photo. Reverse cropping could involve the increase of information by the extended border, but what is added to the extended area is usually supplementary elements of the existing photo such as a section of a cloud, sky, a road, etc. The extension of a border usually involves no substantial increase of information.

76.6% of the respondents OKed this alteration. Still, we see a big difference in acceptance rate between hard news photo (23.4%) and the other two groups of photos (53.8% and 63.3%), which are more or less cluttered to each. One respondent said that he had a hard time with this alteration "because on the outside it doesn't seem to really alter the intent, the content of the picture, but I think it lends itself to abuse in very much the same way as No. 4 [Example #4]. For hard news, I think it should just be this is the way it is."

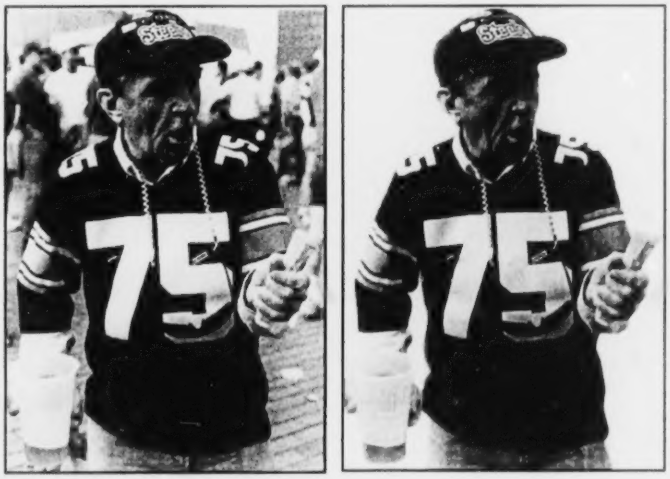
Again, the editors in Reaves' 1993 study were much more conservative. Only 13.1% of the editors surveyed agreed with this kind of alteration.

**Technical Example #4** (Question 4) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the distracting background was eliminated for graphic effect. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 13.9% |
| B = Feature photo. | 48.7% |

| | |
|---|---|
| C = Photographic illustration. | 64.6% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 23.4% |
| Acceptability | 1.27 |



Whiting background is another common practice in print news media. Editors sometimes want to show the subject as if the picture were taken in a studio with a neutral background so as to make sure that no background elements would affect readers' attention to the subject. Or sometimes an editor wants to montage subjects from multiple photos with different backgrounds. Whiting the background could make the combining work faster and easier.

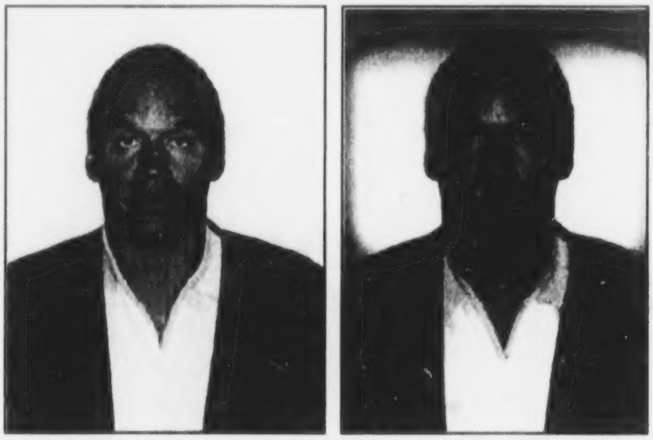
For this kind of alteration that decontextualizes the subject, still 76.6% of the respondents accepted it since, as a reader said, "it doesn't seem so sinister to remove it." However, they seemed to show a good tolerance toward this kind of alteration in photographic illustrations (64.6%), much less so in feature photos (48.7%), and hardly in hard news photos (13.9%) where, again, as that reader argued, time and place needs to be identified. This great difference between acceptance rates explains why the acceptability is lower than that in Technical example #3 though the acceptance rates are the same. This reader expectation corresponds to the actual situation in the industry. That is, almost no such practice can be observed in hard news photos except for a special need such as a portrait of a deceased, more can be found in feature photos, just as the case in Composite Example #2, in which the images of Dustin Hoffman and the image of Tom Cruise from different sources were put together for a feature story, and most of such alterations are found in the form of photographic illustration so that texts and other graphic elements can be added to the whitened areas, as we usually see on the cover of a news magazine.

Reaves' 1993 study found that 13.5% of the editors surveyed tolerated this kind of alteration—an acceptance rate close to the one for hard news photo (13.9%) in my study.

**Technical Example #5** (Question 2) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the subject's face was darkened and the background was lightened for dramatic effect. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 7.6% |
| B = Feature photo. | 15.2% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 29.1% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 64.6% |
| Acceptability | 0.52 |



Technical example #5 is similar to Technical example #1. Both of them actually involved the change of tonality of the subject and the background though the questions were framed in different ways and the tonality in the former case was made darker while the tonality in the latter was made brighter. As a familiar real-life example, the alteration in this photograph published on the cover of the *Time* magazine at that particular sensitive time when the famous football player O.J. Simpson—the subject of this police mug shot—was on trial could be interpreted as ulterior motive loaded as actually was by many readers.

The study shows, only 35.4% of the respondents said that it was all right to do such alteration—a figure much lower than those for the rest of the technical alteration examples. What is also worth paying attention to is that the acceptance rates in all the three types of photos are very low (7.6%-29.1%) though the trend still goes from least accepted in hard news photos to most accepted in photographic illustrations. A two-related-samples T-test on the means of acceptability in Technical example #1 ($\bar{x}$=2.15) and Technical example #5 ($\bar{x}$=0.52) showed a significant difference ($t_{obt}$=16.3; df=157; p<.05).

Simpson's image was one of the most controversial images in these 17 examples of alteration. By adopting an empathic approach, a reader made such a comment:

> They need to keep in mind how would they (*sic*) feel if this was them—their mother, sister, father, brother. Alteration is fine for some purposes, but not anything like the O.J. picture. They wanted him to look dark & like a criminal—b4 [before] the court even tried him.

Speaking for meany readers when comparing the alterations in Technical Example #1 and in Technical Example #5, a reader said that Example #1 seemed very benign because they enhanced the photograph just to make it a clear image. On the contrary, the alteration in Example #5 made Simpson look much more sinister. "He looks like a killer in the second [altered] photograph. In the first [unaltered] photograph, he looks just like a pretty poor pathetic guy that has been run through the ringer."

After viewing all the findings from the five technical examples above, we can find out a fact: in most cases, acceptance rates for technical image alterations were increasingly higher from hard news photo to photographic illustration. Over half of the respondents accepted those technical alterations for photographic illustration in these five examples except for the last one. Example #5 suggests that a very basic technical alteration could also be very wrong in the eyes of the readers if it is mixed with non-technical considerations.

### Content alterations

A content alteration moves, removes, adds, replaces, or distorts certain element(s), usually minor element(s) in a photograph. As a result, the internal structure of the altered photograph is changed. For instance, a man and a tree were one inch apart and now they are half an inch apart; a telephone pole grows out of the head of a subject in an unaltered photograph, and now, it's gone after the alteration; the eyes of the subject happened to be closed at the time when s/he was photographed, and now, they are opened. If we make a comparison between technical alterations and content alterations, we would find that technical alterations present the same content in a different way while content alterations present different content in the same way.

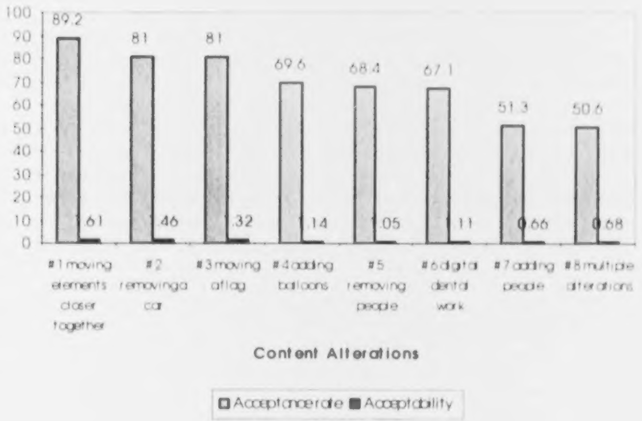


Chart 4: Acceptance Rate and Acceptability of Content Digital Imaging Alterations

Content alterations may or may not substantially affect the conveying of meaning depending on what was altered. A big difference between traditional darkroom alteration of content and digital alteration of content is that the former could be easily detected while the latter is literally undetectable if professionally done. What some respondents felt was scary was that almost anybody, with some hours of training and practice, can become a professional. As my interviews will show, content alteration was very controversial.

In her 1993 study, Reeves placed all the examples in which element(s) were added to a photograph

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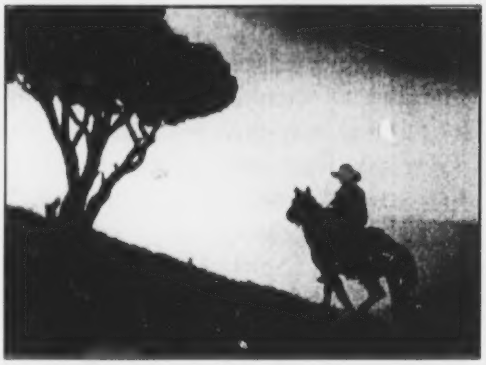
into the category of combination photos. In one of the examples she used for combination photos, the blue color of the sky was intensified, clouds were added and a tree branch was removed. This example seems like a combination of technical alteration and content alteration, not a combination of major elements as shown in the rest of her combination examples. Since clouds are supplementary to the subject (a soldier) in that photograph, adding them is just like removing a phone line in the background, and is an alteration of content in nature. Therefore, I have placed two (almost identical) examples in which some minor elements were added into the category of content alteration. Eight examples were used for this category. I was interested in finding out how removing elements is different from adding elements and how altering still life is different from altering people in terms of acceptability. Chart 4 shows that the acceptance rates for the alterations in all these eight cases went over 50%.

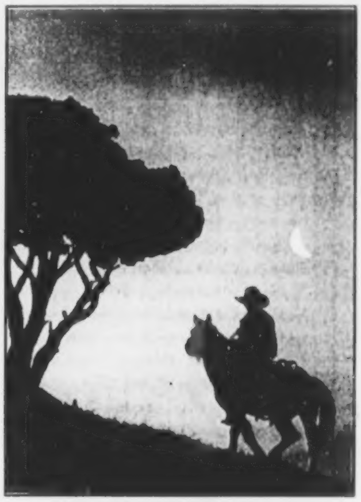
**Content Example #1** (Question 6) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the man and the tree were moved closer together to fit the image to a required size. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 22.2% |
| B = Feature photo. | 60.8% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 78.5% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 10.8% |
| Acceptability | 1.61 |

This kind of alteration is based on a similar assumption to the one in Technical example #2. That is, the alteration reflected what actually happened or could have happened but, unfortunately, did not show up in the picture. When defending the abridgement of space between two pyramids in the cover photo on a 1982 issue of *National Geographic*, which is exactly the same case as this abridgement of space between a horse and a tree, Bill Garrett, editor in chief of *National Geographic* argued: "The effect was the same as if the photographer had moved a few feet." (quoted in Druckrey, 1989, p. 13)





In spite of the fact that this was an alteration involving content, the information loss did not seem significant to the respondents, therefore, a very high acceptance rate (89.2%) as well as a high acceptability (1.61) showed for this example. Over 60% of the respondents agreed with applying such an alteration to feature photos and photographic illustrations.

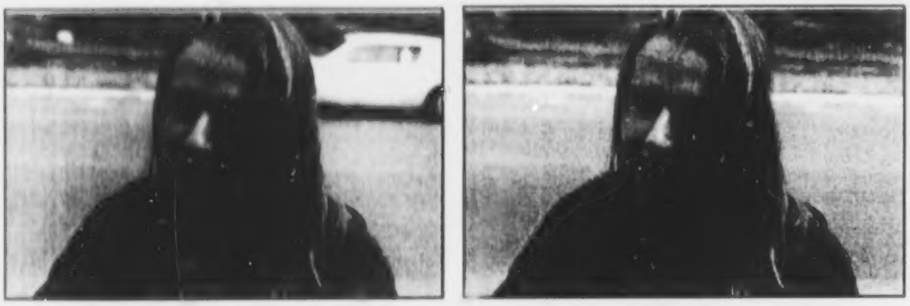
What is interesting to note is that Reaves found in her 1993 study that only 6.1% of the editors agreed with this kind of alteration although, as Reaves said and I agree, removing space between content elements of a photograph has been an entry point in terms of content alteration, which seemed to be the case in my study.

**Content Example #2** (Question 7) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, a distracting car was eliminated. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 18.4% |
| B = Feature photo. | 59.5% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 68.4% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 19.0% |
| Acceptability | 1.46 |

Removing dust, undesired telephone wires, lamp poles, a recklessly included car, etc. had long been



practiced before digital imaging technology came into being. Now, by duplicating the surrounding elements on a computer screen with the stamp tool, or sometimes called clone tool, such alterations can be executed with much greater ease and without being detected.

Obviously, removing a carelessly included car did not mean much to the respondents. 81% of them were positive about such a practice though they tended to be cautious in being over-agreeable. The majority of them frowned at the legitimacy of applying this practice to hard news photos.

Reaves' 1993 study found that around 29.2% of the editors surveyed agreed with eliminating telephone wires in the background of a group of ladies.

**Content Example #3** (Question 12) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the flag in the background was enlarged, slanted and moved to make the composition look more pleasing. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 18.4% |
| B = Feature photo. | 50.6% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 63.3% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 19.0% |
| Acceptability | 1.32 |

This is an interesting example. The flag in the background was not only moved, but also scaled, and distorted. This is a typical example of multiple alterations. However, most respondents did not seem to care much about such salient multiple alterations. Still, 81% of them accepted it though the acceptability was much decreased. One reader sensed from this example the potential of using altered images to serve a political agenda. This gentleman wrote:

> It should be refrained from if additions or omissions could in any way serve a political agenda, regardless of whether the editor intends to promote such an agenda. The erasure of unwanted people and the manipulation of the flag made me the most uncomfortable. Every editor should have a copy of the famous photo of Lenin wearing Trosky' cap permanently affixed to his or her wall.

**Content Example #4** (Question 8) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the left image, the lower right corner seems empty, so some balloons from another photo were added. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 13.9% |
| B = Feature photo. | 41.8% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 58.2% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 30.4% |
| Acceptability | 1.14 |

The opposite of removing elements in a photograph, content alterations sometimes involve adding minor elements such as flowers, clouds, animals, or people who are not regarded as the subjects of the photo so as to fill in empty space, add minor decorative elements, add a certain element that the photographer or

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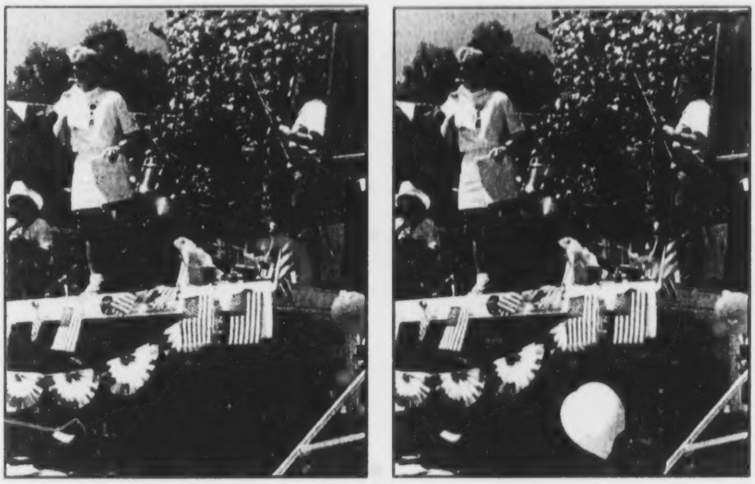


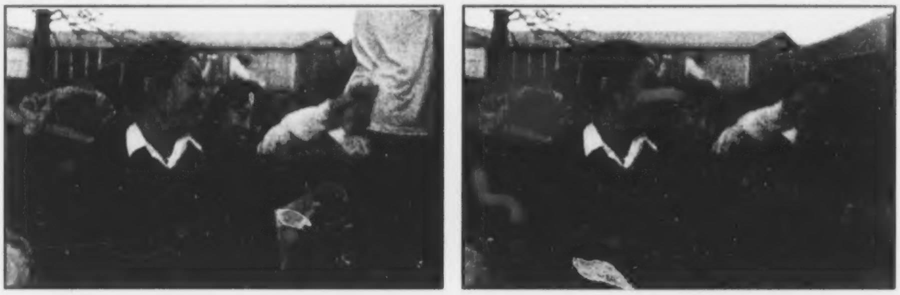
editor thought could have been there but unfortunately was not shown.

Adding elements is a different content alteration because it creates a scene—a combination of elements that did not really exist. That probably explains why both the acceptance rate and the acceptability both dropped though the acceptance rate still was way over 50%.

**Content Example #5** (Question 10) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, two distracting persons in the background were eliminated. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 8.9% |
| B = Feature photo. | 38.0% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 58.2% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 31.6% |
| Acceptability | 1.05 |



Removing people in a photograph has long been practiced by

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media, especially by the communist media. When a political figure was out of favor, for instance, s/he would be ousted physically both from the political arena as well as from an old picture. In the past, the process of getting rid of a person from a photo required great care and precision plus a long time of operation. And now, such a practice has become a piece of cake on a computer.

Compared to the computer editing change in Content Example #2, in which a car in the background was removed, this alteration involving a human being got comprehensively lower acceptance rates from hard news photo to photographic illustration. Also, the general acceptance rate also dropped from 81% to 69.4% and the acceptability from 1.46 to 1.05. A two-related-samples T-test on the means of acceptability in Content Example #2 and Content Example #5 showed a significant difference ($t_{obt}=5.86$; df=157; $p<.05$). It is reasonable to argue that readers' tolerance for digitally removing objects depended, to a certain extent, on what was removed.

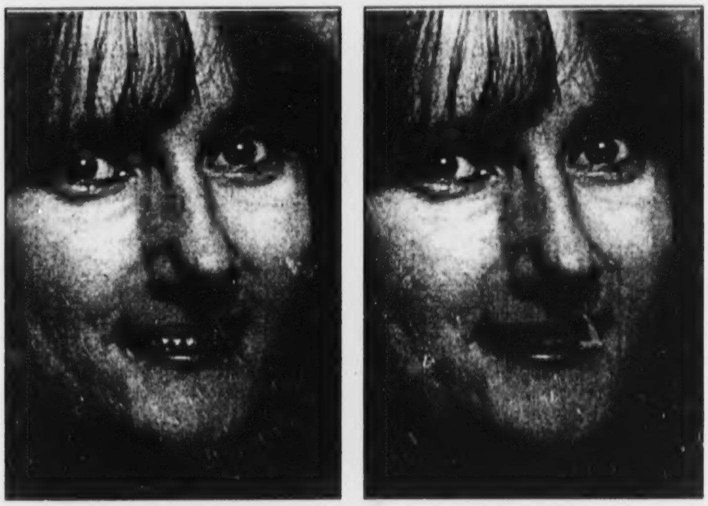
Two similar examples in Reaves' 1993 study showed that 9.7%-10.8% of the editors surveyed agreed with the alteration involving eliminating human beings. The difference between the editors and the readers did not seem to be big on this alteration when the context of hard news photo is considered.

**Content Example #6** (Question 11) described its alteration by stating:

*In the right image, digital dental work was performed on a news figure. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 10.8% |
| B = Feature photo. | 46.8% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 53.2% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 32.9% |
| Acceptability | 1.1 |

Cosmetic alteration is another kind of content alteration that have often been practiced by the media,



especially in advertising. In recent years, such alterations have also been seen in photographs used in documentary contexts. For instance, when someone's eyes were accidentally closed at the time when a picture was taken, the editor could digitally open them. In this example, digital dental work was done to this news figure. Readers' tolerance toward such an alteration was not too bad. Around 50% of them acknowledged that they would accept it if it occurred in a feature photo or as a photographic illustration. However, the acceptability was comparatively low (1.1). This medium acceptance rate was probably best explained by a reader's dilemma when answering this question. By putting herself in the shoes of this mother of the famous sextuplets, this female reader wrote: "I could not decide what to answer to 'dental alteration' (in) picture #11. On the one hand 'I really look good in the alteration.' On the other hand 'It's NOT ME!!' I don't know how I would react." From a different perspective, a gentleman who circled "D" in this question also found it "very wrong" to do this digital dental work because, he argued, this picture showed a particular news figure as opposed to just a picture of a generic woman in America. "If it's a particular person, she should be represented appropriately, even in caricature."

Reaves' 1993 study found that around 27.1% of the editors surveyed agreed with a similar alteration for the reason of doing a favor to the subject: closing a boy's open zipper to avoid potential embarrassment to the boy.

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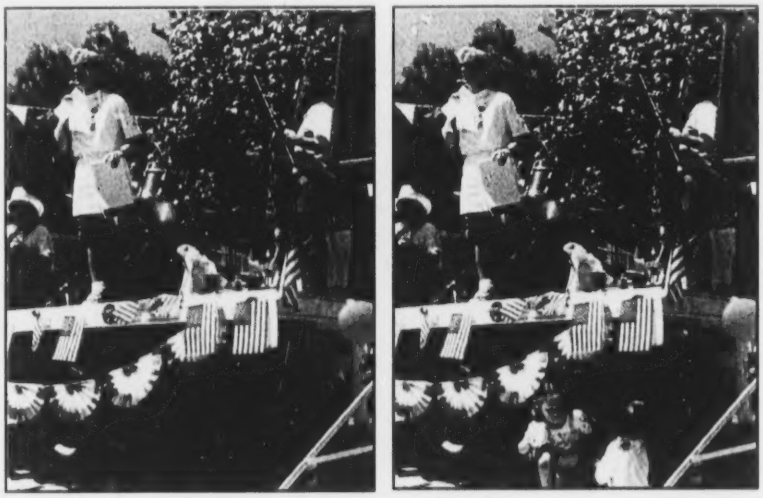
**Content Example #7** (Question 9) described its alteration by stating:

*In the left image, the lower right corner seems empty, so children from some other photos were added. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 6.3% |
| B = Feature photo. | 17.7% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 42.4% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 48.7% |
| Acceptability | 0.66 |



You may have noticed that this alteration is very similar to the one in Content Example #4. The only difference is that still things—balloons—were added in Content Example #4 while human beings were added in this example. You may have also noticed that this example has not ranked directly below or above Content Example #4, which means these two examples were probably quite different in terms of acceptance rate and acceptability and they were.

As controversial as the wild animal photographs shown in Wolfe's 1994 book *Migrations* in which he added zoo animals into natural landscape, this example of adding human being was not well accepted by the respondents. The acceptability was only 0.66. Around half of the respondents negated this kind of alteration as appropriate. A two-related-samples T-test on the two means of acceptability in Content

Example #4 ($\bar{x}$=1.14) and #7 ($\bar{x}$=0.66) showed a significant difference ($t_{obt}$=7.21; df=157; p<.05). This difference, again, tells us that readers could accept alterations involving still life much more than alterations involving human beings.

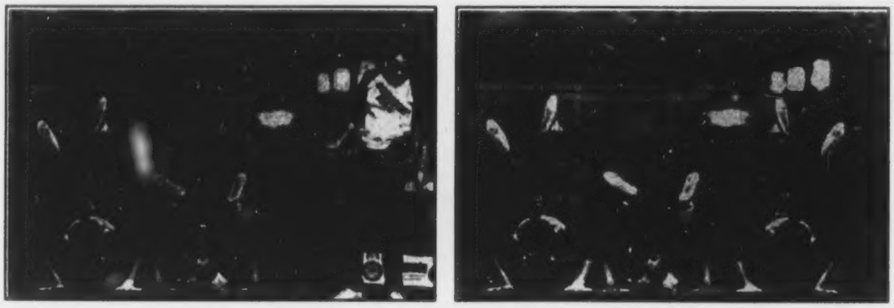
Another puzzle I was eager to solve was if adding elements would get the same acceptability as that of removing elements since these are two quite different ways of manipulating images. First, I averaged the mean acceptability in Content Example #2 and #5, both which removed either still life or human being ($\bar{x}$=1.26) and then I averaged the mean acceptability in Content Example #4 and #7, both which added still life or human being ($\bar{x}$=0.9). A two-related-samples T-test on these two means of acceptability showed a significant difference ($t_{obt}$=7.94; df=315; p<.05). Readers were more forgiving to removing elements than adding elements in pictures.

**Content Example #8** (Question 13) described its alteration by stating:

> *In the right image, the boom box and the girl on the right were eliminated. One of the dancers was copied, flipped and pasted to where the girl once stood. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 4.4% |
| B = Feature photo. | 16.5% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 46.8% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 49.4% |
| Acceptability | 0.68 |

Again, this is an example involving salient multiple alterations



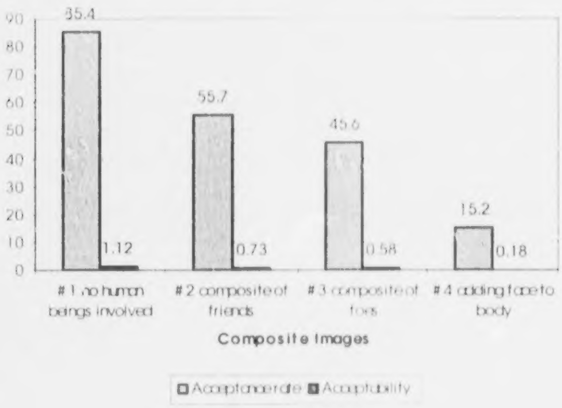
on human beings. Careful readers may notice the fact that the dancer on the left was duplicated, flipped and pasted to the right. Readers were very harsh on this kind of alteration. The comparison between the acceptability in Content Example #3 ($\bar{x}$=1.32) in which multiple alterations were done to a flag and that in this example ($\bar{x}$=0.68) further supports the hypothesis that altering a human being is less acceptable to readers than altering still life ($t_{obt}=7.94$; df=157; $p<.05$).

Content alterations vary greatly in terms of acceptability. It seems that, most of the time, respondents made their decisions whether to accept certain alterations based on if an alteration had changed the original meaning or if human being had been altered. If the answer was yes to either of the cases, they would show strong rejection. Without knowing that I classified these 17 examples of alteration into three categories, a reader automatically made a comparison between technical alterations and content alterations by saying: "[P]hotos should be used as recorded by the photographer. Changes in visual content or meaning should not be acceptable. Minor changes to contrast + cropping could be accepted for printing purposes with no change to content." This opinion is echoed in another two similar voices: "Digital imaging should be used primarily to enhance the quality of a photo without altering its content." Another reader said that digital imaging technology should only be used "to make the whole picture easier to view."

### Composite images

A composite image is something like a painting. It usually starts with one photograph, or sometimes, starts with a blank painting board. Then, different elements are added into that photograph or blank painting board from different sources to compose a brand new image. The elements added are normally not trivial. For instance, two persons from two different photographs are combined to become the subjects of that new photograph; or a head of a person is added onto another person's body to give the person with that head a new look. Composite images could look unreal because of unrealistic scale or impossible combination of things such as a winged pig, but sometimes, they can look very real. So far, a lot of criticism has focused on the practice of forging realistic-looking images without letting readers know what has happened. Readers feel cheated. The acceptance rates for this category of alterations in hard news photo were extremely low (3.2%-7%). This category contains four real-life examples all taken from the media. The names of the publications and all other linguistic information shown upon these images were digitally eliminated by the author of this study.

Chart 5: Acceptance Rate and Acceptability of Composite Images



**Composite Example #1** (Question 14) described its alteration by stating:

*In this image, three separate images were combined: skywriting planes, the Chrysler Building, and the words "New York." In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 7.0% |
| B = Feature photo. | 25.3% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 79.7% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 14.6% |
| Acceptability | 1.12 |

Because of the ease and the undetectability of digital imaging alterations, media professionals often cannot resist the temptation of combining images so as to create a brand new experience for readers. This real-life example taken from the cover of the October 1988 issue of *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine

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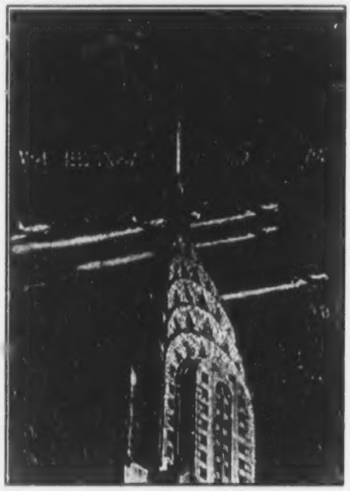


depicted airplanes flying over the Chrysler building together with the words "New York" that was supposedly written by the airplanes. The fact is that these were separate photos shot by the same photographer and later combined by an editor (Reaves, 1989a).

It is interesting to note that this example starts with a very low acceptance rate for hard news photo and a fairly low acceptance rate for feature photo, too. However, the general acceptance rate and acceptability were still pretty high.

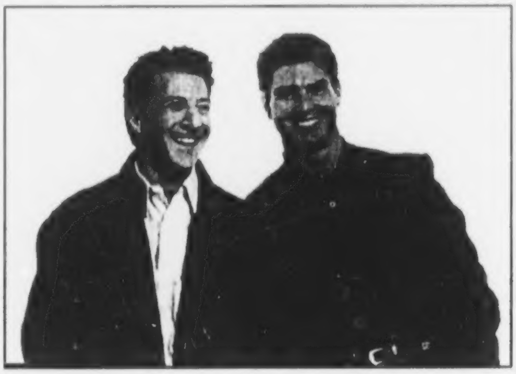
Reaves' 1993 study used exactly the same example and she found that 19.5% of the editors could accept the use of this composite image but it was not clear to what context. If it were for hard news, obviously their standard of accepting this alteration was lower than that of the readers in my study. This example was also the most accepted to the editors in all the composite image examples as it was to my readers.

**Composite Example #2** (Question 16) described its alteration by stating:

> *In this image, separate photos of two celebrities were combined because they were not at the same place when a photo of them together was needed. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 3.2% |
| B = Feature photo. | 24.1% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 46.2% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 44.3% |
| Acceptability | 0.73 |

As a famous example of composite image, the alteration in this image got highly negative feedbacks from the respondents.



In order to get further support for my hypothesis that altering human being tends to get lower acceptability than altering still lives, I compared the still life alteration in Composite Example #1 ($\bar{x}$=1.12) and the alteration involving human being in Composite Example #2, ($\bar{x}$=0.73) which got the highest acceptability of all the composite images containing human beings. As a result, they were significantly different ($t_{obt}$=5.87; df=157; p<.05).

Again, Reaves' 1993 study used the exactly the same example and she found that 12% of the editors tolerated the use of this composite image.

**Composite Example #3** (Question 17) described its alteration by stating:

> *In this image, separate photos of two notable athletes were combined because it was totally impossible to photograph the two celebrities together. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 4.4% |
| B = Feature photo. | 14.6% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 38.6% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 54.4% |
| Acceptability | 0.58 |

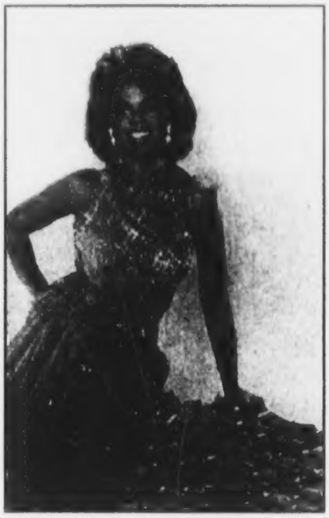
To some extent, this example was the same as the Composite Example #2—combining two celebrities into one image. What was different was that the combination was possible in Example #2 and the combination in Example #3 was impossible. As a result, this example got lower acceptance rate and acceptability. A two-related-samples T-test showed that the acceptability of these two examples was different ($t_{obt}$=3.1, p<.05). This example demonstrates that the context of alteration matters. A reader, who circled B and C for Example 2 and C only for Example 3 explained in my interview:

> I know something about the nature or their relationship (in Example #3). They are enemies, essentially. I know something about the two in [Question] 16 (Example #2), Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. I know something about their relationship. They are friends. So, you show, friends together for a feature photo, it seems to be acceptable to me. You show enemies together for a feature photo, doesn't seem to be acceptable to me. Photographic illustration, of course, is more pure art.

**Composite Example #4** (Question 15) described its alteration by stating:

> *In this image, a photo of a celebrity's face was combined with a photo of a posed model's body because the celebrity would not pose for a portrait. In which of the following photo types would you accept this computer editing change? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.*

| | |
|---|---|
| A = Hard news photo. | 3.8% |
| B = Feature photo. | 3.2% |
| C = Photographic illustration. | 11.4% |
| D = Not acceptable under any of these circumstances. | 84.8% |
| Acceptability | 0.18 |



Both to the readers in my study and to the editors in Reaves' 1993 study, this example of combining one person's head with another person's body was regarded as the least tasteful alteration. Since the subject was put on a dress that was thought to have so much misrepresented the subject, the respondents felt repulsed.

One of them wrote: "(Media) Should respect the wishes of the people whose pictures are being printed—for example pasting a celebrity's face over model's body without the celebrity's consent is totally unacceptable. Digital altering should not misrepresent the facts." Another 75-year-old female reader expressed that she would be very upset if she knew that her head had been added onto another person's body without her permission. She said that "the Oprah Wenfrey (*sic*) picture is absolutely unacceptable—She should sue!" "Keep the fine line of freedom of speech in perspective," warned another reader. Again, many readers adopted an empathetic approach to such an alteration: "Would they care if they were in the picture?" "Would the editor feel comfortable if the alteration published in paper was about himself?"

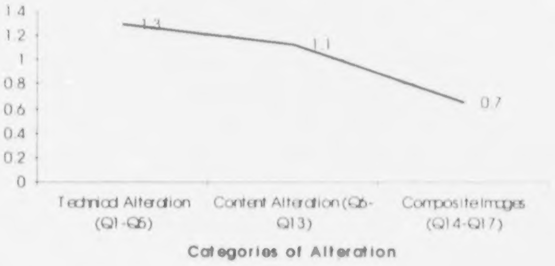
In all the three categories of alteration, composite images obviously have got least accepted. Much of the resentment the respondents had was targeted at this category of alterations simply because many of such alterations were salient and look real but the readers were kept in the dark about such alterations.

By running a general linear model ANOVA for repeated measure on the means of technical alterations ($\bar{x}=1.3038$), content alterations ($\bar{x}=1.1297$) and composite images ($\bar{x}=0.6535$), significant difference was found to exist among them ($F_{obt}=106$, $p<.05$). The confidence interval for each population $\mu$ was

$$1.239 \leq \mu \leq 1.369$$
$$1.065 \leq \mu \leq 1.195$$
$$0.589 \leq \mu \leq 0.718$$

The confidence interval for each population $\mu$ showed no overlapping, which means each mean was significantly different from each other, that is, if we extend the conclusion of this study to the population, chances are readers would be more likely to accept technical alterations in general, less so content alterations and the least composite images.

Chart 6: Average Acceptability of Three Categories of Alteration



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### 6. Who accepted digital imaging alterations the most?

Correlating acceptability of digital imaging alterations with the respondents' biographical data was a frustrating experience, but the result was exciting.

Since almost all demographic data were categorical except for age, which was later categorized into young, middle-aged and old, I dichotomized the respondent acceptability into high and low, too, so that I could cross-tabulate acceptability with each set of the demographic data. The cut point for dichotomizing acceptability was the mean of acceptability, which was 1.1. The range of acceptability was from 0 to 2.18.

I was excited to find that the respondents' awareness of digital image uses in media (awareness) was positively correlated with their acceptability of alterations (acceptability). In other words, those respondents who were aware of the fact that currently most photographs published in newspapers and news magazines are digitally processed though not necessarily altered tended to accept digital imaging alterations (Pearson $\chi$=6.148, p<.05).

I also found that the number of difference between pairs of types of photos was positively correlated with acceptability. That is, the more pairs of types of photos (hard news photo — feature photo; feature photo — photographic illustration; hard news photo — photographic illustration) the respondents could distinguish in their readings of newspapers or news magazines, the more they could accept digital imaging alterations (Pearson $\chi$=9.278, p<.05).

Third, I found that photographic education played a big part in readers' attitudes toward digital imaging alterations. The more photographic education a respondent had received, the more s/he could accept alterations (Pearson $\chi$=6.817, p<.05).

Since the acceptability was positively correlated with photographic experience, I thought it logical to expect that a respondent's exposure to digital imaging technology was also positively correlated with their acceptability. However, the Pearson $\chi$ value (3.353, $p>.05$) was not big enough to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, this correlation could not be established.

Then, I tried to find any potential correlations between acceptability and other demographic data such as media reading breadth (number of types of print media read), newspaper reading frequency, magazine reading frequency, computer use frequency, computer literacy, educational level, and age, but no significant correlations were found. On the other hand, I did find that the readers' awareness of digital image used in media was positively correlated with their newspaper reading frequency (Pearson $\chi=4.052$, $p<.05$), computer use frequency (Pearson $\chi=4.392$, $p<.05$), computer literacy (Pearson $\chi=9.495$, $p<.05$), and digital imaging experience (Pearson $\chi=15.927$, $p<.05$).

After all these significant correlations were found, a big question began to swirl around in my mind. Awareness was correlated with acceptability, and each of the four factors shown above was correlated with awareness, then how come no significant correlation had been found between acceptability and these four factors? Logically, that didn't sound right. This confusion made me think of correlating acceptability with awareness by controlling demographic factors as confounding variables. In other words, I doubted if some group(s) of readers with certain demographic characteristics tended to accept digital imaging alterations if they were aware of the uses of digital images in the media while some other groups of readers with certain other demographic characteristics would get confused about digital imaging and thus tended to give confusing responses.

This train of thought impelled me to cross-tabulate acceptability with awareness by controlling all those demographic variables. Suddenly, a brand new and much more complete picture of relationships appeared before my eyes.

First, according to Table 1, respondents' awareness *was* significantly correlated with their acceptability, but only on the level of high newspaper reading frequency (Every day or almost every day). This table shows that 55 out of 127 (43%) respondents were not aware of the uses of digital images in print news media in spite of the fact that they read newspapers every day or almost every day. For these people, they tended not to see digital imaging alterations in a favorable way. However, more respondents (57%) were aware of such uses and most of them (47/72=65%) tended to say OK to alterations. The Pearson $\chi$ value (11.798, p<.05) shows that those differences were significant. For those who read newspapers less than once a week (low frequency), however, no such correlation was found (Pearson $\chi$ value=2.249, p>.05). This finding suggests that heavy newspaper readers were more aware of the uses of digital images at least in newspapers and they might know something about digital imaging alterations. Such knowledge gained from daily newspaper reading enabled most of them to be able to make informed decisions about the alterations and made most of them more tolerant toward the practice of altering photos in news media. Those who did not read newspapers very often did not seem to know much about the digital revolution in newspapers. As a result, at the time when they were asked for an opinion about the digital imaging alterations, some of them did not know how to respond in an informed way.

Table 1: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Newspaper Reading Frequency

| | | | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson $\chi$ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Newspaper reading frequency | | | | Not aware | Aware | | | |
| Low | Acceptability | Low | Count | 2 | 14 | 16 | 2.249 | .134 |
| | | | Expected Count | 3.7 | 12.3 | 16.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 5 | 9 | 14 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 3.3 | 10.7 | 14.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 7 | 23 | 30 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 7.0 | 23.0 | 30.0 | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | Acceptability | Low | Count | 36 | 25 | 61 | 11.798 | .001 |
| | | | Expected Count | 26.4 | 34.6 | 61.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 19 | 47 | 66 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 28.6 | 37.4 | 66.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 55 | 72 | 127 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 55.0 | 72.0 | 127.0 | | |

This explanation found support in the finding about magazine reading frequency regarding the correlation between acceptability and awareness. For those who read magazines less than once every two weeks (low frequency), no such correlation was found (Pearson $\chi$ value=2.031, p>.05). However, for those who read news magazines at least once a week (high frequency), if they were aware of the uses of digital images in news magazines, they tended to be soft in their attitudes toward this phenomenon (Pearson $\chi$ value=4.494, p<.05). However, if they read magazines even every day and they were still not aware of the uses of digital images, then they tended not to be easy on alterations. It is interesting to note that both in Table 1 and Table 2, those who were aware of the uses of digital images in print news media were around 60% of all respondents regardless of news media reading frequency. And if they frequently read newspapers and news magazines, chances were they became aware of the uses of digital images, and then, they tended be easy on potential image alterations.

Table 2: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Magazine Reading Frequency

| | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson $\chi$ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Magazine reading frequency | | Not aware | Aware | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low | Acceptability | Low | Count | 21 | 20 | 41 | 2.031 | .154 |
| | | | Expected Count | 17.8 | 23.2 | 41.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 15 | 27 | 42 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 18.2 | 23.8 | 42.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 36 | 47 | 83 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 36.0 | 47.0 | 83.0 | | |
| High | Acceptability | Low | Count | 17 | 19 | 36 | 4.494 | .034 |
| | | | Expected Count | 12.6 | 23.4 | 36.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 9 | 29 | 38 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 13.4 | 24.6 | 38.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 26 | 48 | 74 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 26.0 | 48.0 | 74.0 | | |

What is exciting is that more evidence was found in other findings to support the hypothesis that the knowledge about digital images obtained from frequent exposure to them tended to make respondents be more accepting to potential digital imaging alterations. For instance, it was also found that acceptability was associated with awareness in wide print media reading breadth. For those who read more than three types of print news media,[7] they tended to be aware of digital image use and further tended to be more accepting to digitally altered photos (See Table 3). But again, for those who had a smaller print media reading breadth, their response to the alterations showed no such correlation.

Table 3: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Media Reading Breadth

| | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson $\chi$ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of print media read | | Not aware | Aware | | | |

---

[7] The print news media mentioned here include daily newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Herald Times*, news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Business Week*, documentary magazines such as *The National Geographic* and *Life*, "infotainment" magazines such as *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, and tabloids such as *Spy*, *Star* and the *National Enquirer*.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than two types | Acceptability | Low | Count | 19 | 20 | 39 | 1.014 | .314 |
| | | | Expected Count | 16.8 | 22.2 | 39.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 15 | 25 | 40 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 17.2 | 22.8 | 40.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 34 | 45 | 79 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 34.0 | 45.0 | 79.0 | | |
| More than 3 types | Acceptability | Low | Count | 19 | 19 | 38 | 6.404 | .011 |
| | | | Expected Count | 13.6 | 24.4 | 38.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 9 | 31 | 40 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 14.4 | 25.6 | 40.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 28 | 50 | 78 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 28.0 | 50.0 | 78.0 | | |

Computer literacy,[8] computer use frequency, and digital imaging experience are three more examples to support the hypothesis mentioned above. Table 4 demonstrates no correlations between acceptability and awareness in the levels of "no computer literacy" and "low computer literacy." This makes good sense because typing or word processing do not help make a computer user sensitive to the uses of digital images thus to make an informed decision about the uses of digital imaging. On the other end, for those who often surfed the web, or used graphics software or had more knowledge about digital imaging technology because of their aggressive involvement in computer science, were aware of the uses of digital imaging technology in print news media, and thus, tended to be forgiving to potential digital imaging alterations (See Table 4). As an important factor of promoting computer literacy, computer use frequency was supposed to yield a supportive result to the finding in Table 4 in terms of promoting awareness of digital images and cultivating tolerance toward alterations. And it did. Table 5 shows that such a correlation existed on the level of "high computer use frequency" but not on "low use frequency."

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[8] Computer literacy was defined as the extent to which a respondent could operate a computer. Some popular software was ranked according to their logical popularity among computer users starting with typing in word processing software such as Word and WordPerfect, then Internet software such Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer, finally, elite software such as Photoshop, PageMaker, QuarkXpress, and programming languages such as HTML, C++, etc. Logically, this was supposed to be a viable scale. It is hard to imagine, for instance, to be able to use the Internet without knowing how to type in a word processing software since any email software is, to some extent, word processing software. The readers' responses showed that 138 out of 157(88%) including those who answered A (Don't know how to use computer) answered the way designed and desired. This result suggested that this was a reasonable scale though not impeccable. In all the consequent calculations, those 19(12%) deviant answers such as the ones circling D (using advanced graphics or programming software) without circling B (word processing) and C (using Internet software, which are much more popular) or circling C without circling B were eliminated. From A to D, each choice was coded as no literacy, low literacy, medium literacy, and high literacy. The Internet use ability (C) and advanced software use ability (D) were combined in the correlation calculations.

Table 4: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Computer Literacy

| | | | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson χ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Computer literacy | | | | Not aware | Aware | | | |
| No computer literacy | Acceptability | Low | Count<br>Expected Count | 7<br>6.9 | 3<br>3.1 | 10<br>10.0 | 0.012 | .913 |
| | | High | Count<br>Expected Count | 2<br>2.1 | 1<br>.9 | 3<br>3.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count<br>Expected Count | 9<br>9.0 | 4<br>4.0 | 13<br>13.0 | | |
| Low computer literacy | Acceptability | Low | Count<br>Expected Count | 7<br>7.1 | 5<br>4.9 | 12<br>12.0 | .006 | .937 |
| | | High | Count<br>Expected Count | 6<br>5.9 | 4<br>4.1 | 10<br>10.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count<br>Expected Count | 13<br>13.0 | 9<br>9.0 | 22<br>22.0 | | |
| Medium/ high computer literacy | Acceptability | Low | Count<br>Expected Count | 22<br>16.8 | 27<br>32.2 | 49<br>49.0 | 4.592 | .032 |
| | | High | Count<br>Expected Count | 14<br>19.2 | 42<br>36.8 | 56<br>56.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count<br>Expected Count | 36<br>36.0 | 69<br>69.0 | 105<br>105.0 | | |

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Table 5: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Computer Use Frequency

| | | | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson $\chi$ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Computer use frequency[9] | | | | Not aware | Aware | | | |
| Low | Acceptability | Low | Count | 15 | 11 | 26 | .930 | .335 |
| | | | Expected Count | 13.2 | 12.8 | 26.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 12 | 15 | 27 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 13.8 | 13.2 | 27.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 27 | 26 | 53 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 27.0 | 26.0 | 53.0 | | |
| High | Acceptability | Low | Count | 23 | 28 | 51 | 5.870 | .015 |
| | | | Expected Count | 17.2 | 33.8 | 51.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 12 | 41 | 53 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 17.8 | 35.2 | 53.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 35 | 69 | 104 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 35.0 | 69.0 | 104.0 | | |

Finally, let's look at the factor digital imaging experience. As the logic of my argument goes, the knowledge about digital images acquired either from frequent computer use and/or prior exposure to computer science or from frequent and/or extensive print news media readings has direct bearing on respondents' acceptability of digital imaging alterations. The result shown in Table 6 is amazing. Even when respondents knew just a little about digital images, chances were they were aware that digital images were being used in media and they tended to say OK to potential alterations, of course, this was even more true with those who had more digital imaging experience. However, for those who claimed to have no experience with digital imaging, no such correlation existed.

One thing interesting is that a small portion of the respondents obviously did not answer the questionnaire in a consistent way. They did not notice the logic trap I set up in the questionnaire for checking the internal reliability of the study. They forgot what they had answered before and then contradicted themselves in later answers. You may have noticed that in the "None" category (no digital imaging experience) in Table 6, still 26 respondents claimed that they were aware of the uses of digital images in print news media. In Question 30 of the questionnaire, I suggested that the minimum digital imaging experience was "Have only heard of digital imaging." If a respondent did not agree with any of the statements in B, C, D and E choices, then s/he was supposed to circle A (No experience). It is hard to imagine that a person can be aware of the uses of digital images in print news media without even having heard of what digital image is. Fortunately, only 26 respondents (16.5%) failed the internal reliability test, most respondents did a good job.[10]

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[9] High computer use frequency was defined as using computer at least once a day.

Table 6: Correlation between Acceptability and Awareness in Different Levels of Digital Imaging Experience

| | | Aware of digital alteration | | Total | Pearson $\chi$ Value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Digital Imaging Experience[11] | | Not aware | Aware | | | |

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[10] It is interesting to note that several in-depth interview participants acknowledged that they did not think about some of the questions in the questionnaire as long as they should have, and they wanted to change their mind after they talked to me about some of the answers they gave. It is also important to note that their new answers became more rational. For instance, Ms. H accepted the alteration of depth of field in Question 3 for all three types of photos, which was more salient than the alteration of tonality in Question 1 to make the image more printable. However, she only accepted the tonality alteration for photographic illustrations. She said: "I probably have to rethink my answer to Question 1. I really do after we've talked." Actually, this is a major shortcoming of mail survey. No researcher is around to clarify when a respondent answers the questionnaire. Mistakes could be made because of misunderstanding, confusion, or carelessness. The best we can hope is that mistakes will be canceled out by a large sample size.

[11] If a respondent had only heard of digital imaging, s/he was classified as having "low digital imaging experience; if a respondent had seen someone else process digital images but could not do it him or herself, s/he was classified as having medium experience; if a respondent could process digital images a little or had more advanced knowledge of processing and manipulating digital images, then, s/he was classified as having high experience.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| None | Acceptability | Low | Count | 19 | 16 | 35 | .194 | .660 |
| | | | Expected Count | 19.8 | 15.2 | 35.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 15 | 10 | 25 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 14.2 | 10.8 | 25.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 34 | 26 | 60 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 34.0 | 26.0 | 60.0 | | |
| Low | Acceptability | Low | Count | 11 | 5 | 16 | 5.068 | .024 |
| | | | Expected Count | 7.6 | 8.4 | 16.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 7 | 15 | 22 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 10.4 | 11.6 | 22.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 18 | 20 | 38 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 18.0 | 20.0 | 38.0 | | |
| Medium/ High | Acceptability | Low | Count | 8 | 18 | 26 | 6.307 | .012 |
| | | | Expected Count | 4.4 | 21.6 | 26.0 | | |
| | | High | Count | 2 | 31 | 33 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 5.6 | 27.4 | 33.0 | | |
| | | Total | Count | 10 | 49 | 59 | | |
| | | | Expected Count | 10.0 | 49.0 | 59.0 | | |

In spite of the fact that I did not find significant correlation between acceptability and age and education, I did find that the younger the readers were, the more types of print news media they were exposed to ($\chi$=9, p<.05), the more often they read newspapers ($\chi$=31, p<.05), the more often they used computer ($\chi$= 14, p<.05), the higher their computer literacy was ($\chi$=29, p<.05), and finally, the more digital imaging experience they had ($\chi$=10, p<.05). I also found that the higher the readers' educational levels were, the more types of print news media they were exposed to ($\chi$=22, p<.05), the more often they read magazines ($\chi$=8, p<.05), the more often they used computer ($\chi$=7, p<.05), the higher their computer literacy was ($\chi$=34, p<.05), and finally, the more digital imaging experience they had ($\chi$=10, p<.05).[12] These findings tell us that readers' age and education were directly related to their extent of exposure to digital images in certain pattern though not directly related to their acceptability of digital imaging alterations.

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[12] Gender was not part of my hypotheses about acceptability of digital imaging alterations or awareness of digital imaging uses in media. However, I did correlate gender with those variables only to find no significant correlations.

### 7. Readers' concerns over digital imaging alterations

Readers were concerned that digital imaging alterations make them unable to tell what is truth and what is fiction. as a result, the media is eliminating its trustworthiness.

The readers' biggest concerns about digital imaging alterations were that media would enhance or distort an image without stating that an image has been altered to create an unrealistic picture that might not present the full circumstances. As a result, media would intentionally or unintentionally change the meaning or feeling of a picture which affects media's impartiality, creates bias and outright false representation, projects a viewpoint, sways opinions, and eventually misleads readers. Manipulating images could accidentally eliminate or alter useful and important information that journalist may not see as necessary. The public is trained to believe what they perceive as news to be factual, and now, they cannot see what actually happened and the truth may not come out. They were afraid that they could not believe what they saw—no longer "what you see is what you get." If digital imaging alteration becomes common place, they said, it leaves little to believe. A reader wrote: "If photos are altered, nothing is true."

Some alterations were unfair to the people whose pictures are altered, some readers said. One reader worried that his perceptions of people or stories could be manipulated any way the editor chooses: "Since not many people are looking over their shoulder to make sure they do not overstep their boundaries, alterations could get way out of hand." Voicing for many readers, another respondent gave a very strong statement: "As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words; words elicit ideas, perceptions and emotions. Photojournalists who alter images which alter the commonly understood meaning of a picture, do so at their own peril."

## 8. Guidelines and principles for using digitally altered images proposed by readers

65% of the respondents showed their interest and enthusiasm in defining and establishing guidelines and principles for using altered images in documentary contexts. Some of them made aggressive efforts in providing a package of guidelines and principles. For instance, Reader #67 proposed the following four guidelines and principles:

1. Examine the motivation for the alteration
2. Examine by multiple people. NO SECRETS!
3. Cosmetic or semantic change?
4. Realize that deception or reckless alteration = litigation and less profits and criminal charges and loss of credibility, a slippery slope.

However, most readers gave short and concise guidelines and principles. These were combined with their concerns about the abuse of this new technology and their hope for the media professionals to make responsible use of this new technology. Summarizing what they wrote and said, I derived the following guidelines and principles.

First, many readers said, generally, digitally altered images should not be used. This finding suggested that even if readers' acceptance rate was high for a specific alteration, the high acceptance rate should not be interpreted as to mean that editors can go ahead and do it with impunity. What readers were trying to convey was that they could tolerate specific alterations to a certain extent, but they did not encourage alterations. As one reader said: "The software looks pretty easy to use and the results are spectacular. However, I am far more impressed with a fabulous un-altered photo anyway." This reader circled 16 "photographic illustration," 2 "feature photo" and 1 "hard news photo."

Second, if the media have to use an altered image, they should let readers know. When asked the question "After an editor has decided to use a digitally altered image, he or she should let readers know that the image was altered. Do you agree?" surprisingly, almost 100% of the readers said yes in one way or another. 59% of them unconditionally agreed that they had the right to know of alteration and 24%-30% of them said it depends on how much alterations were involved or what motivation was involved. Many readers requested for a disclaimer beside altered images. One reader wrote: "Don't alter photos just to make them more appealing. Readers should know when photos have been altered." Another reader wrote: "[My] Biggest concern is misleading viewers by not stating an image has been alter (*sic*). Documentation suggests truth. Documentation is equated with truth. When reporting news it is important to inform the viewer that a level of veracity was compromised."

Third, media need to evaluate the type of photo when using an altered image: leave alteration for clarity characteristics only and for hard news photos, make alterations judiciously in feature photos and photographic illustrations though the latter two, they said, have more leeway since they work more as art than as news. One of the interviewees related hard news photo to fact and court evidence: "I am trying almost to look at it (hard news photo) like a burden of evidence in a court case. I mean, this is hard news, this is fact. This is the way it was. This is what it looked like from the lens of this camera. All be it. It's hard news." Readers demanded that the media apply the highest and strictest standards to hard news photos simply because "[n]ews is no art." They also demanded that hard news be accompanied by real unaltered images. "If alteration is needed then go with a different image or none."

Fourth, readers suggested that media should try to reduce alteration to the technical minimum. Some readers warned that digital imaging should not become the apathetic failsafe for photographic incompetence or laziness. As one reader wrote: "If they want better photos (without objects that are distracting), they should get better photographers that know how to take good photos and know how to click their cameras more than once." On the other hand, they believed that content and meaning of a photograph should not be changed to misrepresent, let alone harm a subject or to mislead readers. They said that media should present facts and truth and present them accurately and honestly in digital images, even if the facts and truth are not "politically correct." Readers have the right to see all.

Fifth, media should put themselves in the subject's shoes to see if they would care if they were in the altered picture. They should respect the subject's wish in terms of altering an image. Some of them singled out the cases of the darkened O.J. Simpson cover photo and the image of Oprah Winfrey's head put on someone else's body as examples to illustrate the inappropriateness of altering an image to potentially harm a person without consulting the person. As one reader said: they "should respect the wishes of the people whose pictures are being printed—for example pasting a celebrity's face over a model's body without the celebrity's consent is totally unacceptable. Digital altering should not misrepresent the facts."

Finally, many readers mentioned morality as a guideline. They believed that media should consider moral-ethical guidelines and not be guided by what is strictly legal. As one reader wrote:

> I do not think you can restrict editors from doing this kind of journalism with out (*sic*) crossing the line of the freedom of press. If we have the technology to alter photos, then it is up to the editors (*sic*) conscience to guide them. I think it is a moral issue more than a legal issue.

Going even farther but primarily delivering the same message, another reader wrote: "Do not use digitally altered images at all. Have high principles and morals. Then no guidelines are required."

### "Where do you draw the line?"—two case studies

So far, I have addressed the readers' awareness of the uses of digital images in print news media, their understanding of and attitudes toward digital imaging alterations, their concerns about the consequences brought up by this new technology and their wishes for how the media professionals will cope with the issue of digital imaging alterations.

What I have not talked about so far is their rationale of choosing A, B, C or D. in other words, we do not know why they answered the survey questions the way they did, what differences they saw in different examples of alteration, and how they related their attitudes toward digital imaging alterations to their understanding of truth since many of them claimed in their answers that altered images could not convey truth any more. I would like to know what truth meant to them. Did they believe that digital images have an evidential function? How did they decide that a picture was true or not true? Did they treat visual alterations the same way as they treat linguistic alterations in quotes used in news?

As I said before, I conducted nine in-depth interviews. Here, I will focus on two of them. Different from quantitative methods, qualitative methods strive for depth to dig out the answers to the hows and whys behind a phenomenon. Therefore, the discussion of these two cases is not for the purpose of making the thinking of those three readers represent the population since these readers were neither randomly selected nor were they enough to represent the population. Instead, these two cases will give us a chance to better understand the way they thought about digital imaging alterations.

### 1. Mr. A: Truth is perceived subjectively, but needs to be presented objectively

Mr. A, 36, a mechanical engineer specialized in military electronics. He had taken some graduate courses and was thinking of continuing the studies to get a masters degree. He was born into a Judeo-Christian family and claimed to know a lot about the Bible but he did not practice Christianity. At the time of the interview, he was undergoing some frustration and some confusion brought by his divorce from his ex-wife, which was, once in a while, mentioned in the interview as illustrations about his understanding of truth, fact and alteration.

Because of his mechanical electronics specialization, he had been extensively exposed to the digital imaging technology used in his workplace, which was not the same as that used in news media. Mr. A said that he was aware of the uses of digital images in print news media, but he did not seem to know much about what was going on in the print news media. He could only distinguish hard news photo and photographic illustration. He said that he rarely read newspapers and almost never read general interest news magazines though he read special interest magazines such as *Scientific American*, *American Heritage of Technology & Invention* once or twice a month. In comparison, his computer use frequency was pretty high (more than three times a day) because of the nature of his work and he possessed very high computer literacy. He had received no formal photography education, but he could process digital images a little by himself.

His alteration acceptability score was 1.88, closed to the high end of the sample (0-2.18). Mr. A accepted alterations in the contexts of feature photo and photographic illustration in the great majority of the 17 questions and in the context of hard news photo twice. He circled D (Not acceptable under any of these circumstances) only once. In spite of the fact that he seemed like an easy person on digital imaging alteration, he insisted that any alteration should be made known to the public after it was used.

Mr. A is a very good example for illustrating the finding about readers' different treatments on three types of photos. He explained that the reason why he was easy on alterations in photographic illustrations was that he regarded photographic illustrations as art and "artistic license or poetic license" should be allowed in them: "It's almost like a cartoon. It just happens to use more real-life images. And the same thing with feature [photo]." At this point, he bound feature photo together with photographic illustration. For hard news photo, Mr. A thought that "it should just be straight facts." To use his own wording: "you are more on the bubble to represent facts as they are when you are doing (altering) a hard news photo." He found some alterations unacceptable in the context of hard news photo, but he allowed the change of tonality for clarity reason and the change of depth of field for emphasis purpose in hard news photos because they do not "editorialize to change the content." Mr. A believed that "photographic illustration is almost pure art. Hard news photo is almost pure fact. And they should be retained as such."

However, he, later, swung feature photo from photographic illustration to the hard news photo side when he talked about the alteration in Oprah picture, in which he circled C only. Mr. A explained that, in a photographic illustration, you can put an elephant's body on her to lampoon her or whatever, but a feature photo containing a news figure like her worked more as a news photo and less and less as art. He said: "Again, this person is in the public view. We know her. We know what her body shape is. The feature is about her. I don't think, I mean, in a sense, a feature photo becomes more a hard news [photo]." He believed that altering such a feature photo with a particular visible news figure lost "a little more legitimacy."

This example of indeterminancy about a feature photo in terms of alterations could illustrate why for most of the time the acceptance rate of an alteration in a feature photo leans toward photographic illustration, but some other times, especially when salient alterations involve a news figure, it leans toward hard news photo (i.e. Technical Example #5/O.J.; Content Example #8/multiple alterations; Composite Example #3/skaters; Composite Example #/Oprah).

Talking about the issue of indeterminancy of locating a feature photo, I believe we cannot fully understand this phenomenon without looking into the issue of what has been altered. Actually, what had been altered determined, to a great extent, readers' attitudes toward a specific alteration. I found that alterations on human beings were significantly less acceptable to the readers than alterations on still lives. Here, Mr. A's case works, again, as a good example.

Since Mr. A said that he would not like an altered image of Oprah in a feature photo, I proposed to him that we conjectured that the lady in Question 7 was Oprah Winfrey. A car in the background was removed in Question 7. I asked Mr. A if it was still all right to remove the car in a feature photo and he was positive because, as he said, it did not "change who she is. It just takes a car out of her ear. No hard news photo." What Mr. A was concerned about was that the Oprah composite image would alter the meaning of the original image and misrepresented her personality "because she was placed on a pile of money." He said: "It is lampooning her as a glamorous greedy bitch. Very unattractive in our society. I am not saying I am a big Oprah fan, but I don't think it's fair to her. ... they cast her in this very terrible light. ... she should be protected a little bit." Mr. A's example tells us that many readers like him seemed less concerned about some minor alterations around a subject than about the alteration of who the subject really is.

Talking about whether media should let readers know when an altered image is used, Mr. A insisted that this is definitely necessary. He thought that this was something like converting a movie to a TV screen when, usually, something like the following would be stated at the very beginning of a movie: "This movie has been altered from its original format to fit your TV screen." Mr. A said that a note under the altered photo could give the alteration some more legitimacy and he would find acceptable an alteration which he used to think unacceptable in the context of feature photo. However, Mr. A's feeling toward this kind of note was complex. When I asked him: "What kind of feeling you would have when you saw such a symbol or note under an altered photo?" Mr. A expressed that he would not like the symbol and he would thereby have a negative view of the altered image. He believed that the first impressions are the lasting ones and an altered image could cause damage no matter whether a little note follows an altered image or not.

As you have seen, many readers were concerned that digital imaging alterations may prevent truth from coming out. Probably out of all the interviewees, Mr. A talked the most about his understanding of truth.

Mr. A believed that truth exists in this world, but he claimed that everybody has his or her own truth; truth is based on a person's belief system; truth should be differentiated from fact; although truth is perceived subjectively, it, nevertheless, should be presented objectively.

Mr. A said that he had agonized about the issue of differentiating fact from truth when going through his divorce. According to Mr. A, his ex-wife spoke of things he did during their marriage that he did not remember, did not even agree with, but yet, he said, they had become truth to her. He said: "Some people are delusional, actually. They convince themselves something is true based on their perceptions of certain facts." He, then, suddenly stood up right in front of me and said:

> You might perceive the truth as me becoming threatening to you. Well, in fact, the fact is I stood up like this. ... My truth may be I am getting up to go to get a drink of water. ... The photograph would capture the fact that I am standing here like this. Your interpretation and my interpretation of the fact then becomes our concepts of truth.

To Mr. A, truth comes from interpretation, therefore, it is subjective, and is based on an individual's perception of certain facts. In order to enhance his point, he gave another example:

> I would separate fact from truth. I want to give you a perfect example. Abraham Lincoln used to tell a story about how people could get the facts all right, but their conclusions could still be wrong. He told a story about a kid who lived on a farm. He goes to his daddy, and says: "Paul, I saw our sister Susie up in the hayloft with a hired man. And well, she is pulling up her skirt, and he is taking down his trousers, and they are getting ready to pee on our hay." You know, they are not gonna pee on the hay. But the kid, in his mind, the facts were straight. He thought they were gonna pee on the hay. Well, I am sure the farmer knew what they were gonna do. That's an example of truth vs. fact.

Mr. A further enhanced his point by differentiating factual representation and truthful representation later. He thought that there could be many facts about an event, and that decontextualizing facts could cause an untruthful representation. As a result, he realized that "all of a sudden, you need to editorialize a bit yourself right now, and help the reader to understand what's going on here." He mentioned a basketball game he just saw to illustrate the point that factual representation and truthful representation are different:

> I saw, um, when Purdue played in a fiesta bowl, or whatever the bowl, Purdue won, and yet, on the story highlights, all I saw were clips of their adversary, making a first down here, making a catch, making an interception here. The factual representations were true. But the truthful representation was that Purdue dominated and won the game. In that case, there wasn't really a truthful representation, because one would be led to believe that Purdue got beat by just watching the facts, just watching the television with no sound on, and forgetting the score in the corner when, in fact, if you turn on the sound, now you get, Oh, the fact is Purdue won. ... Yeah, then you get into editorializing.

Since facts are the basis for interpretation of truth, and even when facts are straight, facts could lead to different versions of truth, presenting facts as they were was important to Mr. A although he had a painful time to reach the conclusion during the interview that editorializing of content was necessary. Mr. A said that his military experience made him possess a strong sense of being ethical: "I have a mood of more obligation to be ethical. Present true facts as truth. I don't like muddy water. I mean, when facts are facts, they should be presented as facts." He said that facts taken out of perspective can become a big lie. Therefore, he did not like the kind of editorializing like taking away a Coke can from a news picture though that seems trivial. Mr. A acknowledged that digitally altering a photograph may not necessarily change the truth-value of that photograph just as he did not believe that altering a quote would necessarily change the meaning of a person's quote. He did not accept most ways of altering a quote except that "Getting rid of some words or sentences irrelevant to the theme may improve the quality of a story" which is more or less equivalent to the basic technical alteration in a photo.

Mr. A did not like editorializing of digital images because he noticed that

> people color things in their favor because they don't want to present the truth in many ways or they have some invested interest. Everybody does that, even myself. ... I believe everybody comes back and brushes their leads behind their tracks. And makes sure that it's a rosier picture as possible,

even those who try to be objective.

However, when editorializing becomes inevitable, Mr. A emphasized the importance of integrity, accuracy and objectivity in presenting truth. Mr. A believed that fairness, balance, objectivity, integrity and accuracy are all important in an attempt to convey truth. Since I was not really sure of what Mr. A meant by objectivity here, I continued asking: "Did you say that truth is subjective just now?" Immediately, I heard an interesting answer:

> Yes, truth is subjective. I mean, it's the most subjective thing. But, if you present things objectively, then you are attempting to provide the truth. ... And we are getting back to that threatening, standing up, OK? If you are going to present this article, let's say, somebody snapped the picture, you are going to present this picture of me looming over you, you know, in what could even be at that instant, a threatening fashion. If you are going to present this article to the world, truthfully, you have the fact of me standing there. And everyone would draw their conclusion. Half of the people probably would say, "God, he's angry." And another guy would say, "Looks like he is gonna go pee," or whatever. You know, it just depends. There would be subjectivity in how it is received. But if it were presented objectively, it would present the truth.

To Mr. A, factual representation is a specific representation of an event. It is part of an event. And truthful representation is more a general picture of the event, the big picture. "If you are asking about truth and fact, they mimic each other. When you start widening the context, then, you can get a big picture to be truthful. Then you open everything up doing interpretation."

Mr. A believed that a reporter can try to be objective in presenting facts but there is no objective criteria in deciding what is true. What is true depends on a person's belief:

> One thing is for sure I know that in any controversial issue, there are usually at least two sides. And they've both got their valid points. If they didn't, there wouldn't have been a controversy, and to just write off, if you have a particular viewpoint, just to write off those without opposite viewpoint is a falicy. If we have any sophistication at all, you realize that the other person just has a different perception and their concept of truth. I mean we can go with abortion, we can go with whether the President should be removed from office. I mean, you name it. And it just comes down to the simple initial beliefs, and those people have to go with their beliefs and there is not always a way to quantify.

Finally, he came to the conclusion that "Truth does not exist. You can't get at the truth." He totally contradicted his prior statement that truth does exist. His argument was that "the truth of the whole situation cannot be known. So, you have micro truth, you have, I mean different classes of truth. The truth of the situation cannot be known from a simple factual representation." The best people can do, as he understood and wished, was "Keep it close to the bone."

Typical of all respondents' answers, Mr. A invested more trust in the front-page news photos on serious newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* and the photos accompanying a news story or feature story in *Newsweek* and *Time* than tabloids such as *Star* and *Sun* although he did not totally distrust the photos in the latter.

Mr. A said that he had no problem accepting a hard news photo carried in a newspaper like *The New York Times* and processed by traditional photographic process as a piece of evidence in a courtroom although, he immediately pointed out, a factual representation may not necessarily be truthful. Then he showed a little concern over having a digital image serve as a piece of evidence though he was positive: "I think they should be used warily. ... If you are going to present evidence, all the rules of evidence apply." He mainly was referring to a chain of custody. When asked how to maintain the chain of custody for a digital image, he mentioned transmitting a digital image as a secure file via secure lines: "You can code things. There are ways of making sure your electronic data can remain confidential or classified. ... The chain of custody must be maintained." As a matter of fact, Mr. A was talking about an ideal situation because it is really questionable that such a chain of custody can be maintained. When a digital image is taken for a newspaper or news magazine, rarely would it be intended to serve as future courtroom evidence, then who would think of implementing a chain of custody?

Eventually, Mr. A came back to the issue of integrity and believed that integrity plays a big part in digital imaging alterations and in using a digital image as court evidence. He was pessimistic about people's ability to seperate fact and fiction. And he was concerned about the unethical use of this new technology. He said: "You just reminded me of Mark Twin. I mean, this isn't new just because we have the digital imaging. Mark Twin was saying, 'figures don't lie, but liars sure can figure.'" For guidelines and principles, he said that editors need to make interpretation themselves as to what kind of photographs they are dealing with for alteration. Then they should decide whether their goal is integrity, objectivity, accuracy, fairness and balance.

### 2. Ms. S: Postmodernism is dead

Typical of a kind of respondents, Ms. S circled "D" all through the first 17 questions. Therefore, her alteration acceptability score was 0. She was a firm believer that no alterations should be done to any photographic images. As one of the youngest respondents (25 years old), Ms. S was not only highly educated but was also an art student (a third-year graduate student in a Master of Fine Arts program). She was born in a Catholic family but did not practice Catholism. She took a basic-level photography class and could process digital images a little by herself. In spite of the fact that she used computer only once or twice a week, she knew how to use a lot of high-end computer software. Because of the busy course work that she had in order to finish the last semester of her graduate studies, she did not read print news media heavily. What she read included news magazines and documentary magazines though she said she did not like news magazines. Television and radio news programs were her primary news sources. She did not watch tabloid TV programs at all. Among the three pairs of photos, she could only tell the difference between hard news photo and photographic illustration. With all that knowledge background, she claimed that she was fully aware of the fact that currently most photographs published in print news media were digitally processed.

Ms. S strongly opposed to digital imaging alterations because, she argued, if people don't say something about such alterations, "silence is sort of indication nothing is wrong." She was concerned that people were susceptible to being persuaded and she thought digital imaging alteration was another way "which people could be persuaded to think one way as opposed to another."

Ms. S said that her background in art exerted a great impact on how she viewed those questions. As a sculptor, she often manipulated things to communicate content. She knew a lot of photographers and had a lot of experience with looking at photographs. When doing something creative, she said, there seemed to be more leeway to supply an image or an object with altered content. "But when you are talking about documentation," she continued, "part of the definition is that it's documenting, it's relaying some sort of fact. And if the fact is not being relayed, then the definition is negated."

As an artist, Ms. S firmly believed in the concept of truth. When talking about the art education she has received, she said that postmodernism in art was considered dead. "It's sort of presented to us no longer being an issue." Therefore, she said they did not discuss it that much. And when they did discuss it, they discussed it in the past tense "as if sort of the glory of it has already passed. Maybe this is just sort of like the residue of postmodernism." She agreed to a limited extent with the postmodern idea that there is no one singular truth. She took herself as an example: "I have my own repertoire of personal truth, but I don't hold other people responsible for those truths." What made her dissatisfied with postmodernism was that "postmodernism seems so undefined, which is actually troubling because you don't really know where you are, or where it is going. ... There is a sort of lack of history or sense of history." She was concerned about whether NBC nightly news had any more veracity than Hard Copy: "It seems they are starting to mesh. Like the line between them starting to fade. So, that's kind of scary."

Ms. S was eager to express her idea about truth. She took the initiative to talk about her understanding of how a picture should be read. When explaining why she circled "D" all the time, she said:

> In general, you know, if you take a photograph or something, that's supposed to represent truth because those things were actually there in that space. So when you start altering that image, I think it also, I think it is a fact that is a photograph, has something to do with the fact that you think it is a truth.

For my interviewees, equating photograph to truth seemed like a universal pattern of picture reading. Through years of news exposure, a sense of news has been cultivated among them. Readers like Ms. S believed that a news photograph is supposed to be un-altered and "actual," and photographs were generally trustworthy.

When asked what truth meant to her, Ms. S immediately jumped to a conclusion similar to Mr. A's: "Truth is something that is impossible to attain. You know, it's like, it's nice to shoot for, but it's kind of something that is never going to happen." She regarded truth as individual and claimed that no universal truth exists: "I think that I may be making up my own sort of definitions of truth and promoting them to my art work or presenting them, but I would never say that I could reveal any sort of universal truth. I wouldn't even attempt to do that. I mean, I don't believe it really." Again, like Mr. A, she regarded truth as subjective and relying on what a person believes: "I think it's pretty much subjective. Well, I know for sure because I don't believe in the same things that other people believe in. You know, I mean that's the source of so much conflict in our world." But later, she acknowledged that "there are probably some things that people could agree on." Both Mr. A and Ms. S seemed to be struggling with the concept of objective truth. They both agreed that truth is subjective in nature but still tried to hold on to the idea that there might be collectively agreed upon truth. They did not seem to know how to compromise between the two concepts.

Since Ms. S mentioned the issue of revealing truth in art, I asked her: "What's the difference between the kind of truth in art work and the truth revealed in news stories?" She gave a long answer which I think it worthwhile to quote here:

> I know that the truth being revealed in art work is not necessarily true. And the truth being promoted in reporting or documentation *is* true. And so I guess like, it goes back to being subjective and or objective. Documentation, reporting, or news should be more objective whereas some sort of creative endeavor has liberty to be more *subjective*. Artists who promote their idea of truth as something that *is* objective, I probably have disdain for that. And, you know, that's sort of a turn-off. It's repulsive to me. It's repulsive to think that they understand what my version of truth is. And they think that their truth is the truth that everyone should believe in. I mean that's not a good thing as far as artist is concerned. So I would guess I would link the objective to the news and the subjective to the art. And then, you know, I guess, the question would be like how do you come up with an objective truth for documentation. I guess that's why I keep thinking of some way to discuss levels of truth then if you are gonna talk about in relationship to news and reporting. You need to know what is fact and what wasn't if they wanna use fact for truth. And it's OK if facts have been altered if you know that they have been altered. Because at least you can take that into consideration and know that maybe it's not presenting things as truthfully as it should be or could.

Interestingly, Ms. S, as an artist, did not give art much credit in terms of truth revelation but thought it mandatory for news reporting to take on the responsibility of revealing truth. Like Mr. A's 'micro truth,' Ms. S also used the term 'levels of truth' to address the issue of mixture of partial facts and partial imagination in news reporting. Unfortunately, Ms. S never clarified her idea of how to come up with an 'objective truth for documentation' with her 'levels of truth.'

Ms. S consistently drew a very distinctive line between the art world and the world of reporting. If alterations were done in photographs like the cover photo of O.J. Simpson in the creative world to communicate his guilt, she said she had no problem at all. "But, when you are reporting something, and it is supposed to be relaying some sort of fact, alterations, then, does not seem to be appropriate, a liberty to take." Since she thought that hard news photos, as well as feature photos and photographic illustrations are all used in documentary contexts, she believed they are supposed to work more as truth carriers than as art. Obviously, she applied a much stricter standard to feature photos and photographic illustrations in terms of alterations than Mr. A did.

Since Ms. S made a distinction between fact and truth, I asked her to clarify her idea. Her answer was that truth maybe has more spiritual or emotional connotations to it and "a little more slippery to define." Fact, on the other hand, "is a known, a given. It's very clear-cut." She reached the conclusion that fact can be proved while truth cannot.

But is fact a known and a given? What about a reporter's role in selecting and constructing facts for a news story? I was interested in knowing if she really thought that changing the fact of a photograph definitely changes the truth of that photograph. Then, I mentioned the example in Question 3: the background has become blurrier and the teacher stands out now after the depth of field of the image was altered. "Do you think that the truth has been altered in this photograph?" I asked. She answered:

> I would say no. The truth has not been altered. But that's not the issue to me. The issue is the fact that it could be altered. You know, it may not be in this particular example, but it's all this manipulation that points to the fact that there is a power to do that. You know, like here, it is being manipulated in Question 2 (O.J. picture). ... So that's why I circled D. It just seems a lot easier to just not accept it.

Here, Ms. S did agree that altering an image does not necessarily alter the truth value of that image. However, since the line is hard to draw as to where to stop manipulation, to her, it is safer not to alter any images so that there is no need to draw the line. This was also her attitude toward altering quotes. Overall, she disapproved any alterations in quotes because it is hard to tell if truth has been abridged by an alteration. "The potential is there."

To Ms. S, "truth means honest, accurate, sort of probably link to perfection some way," and truthful representation primarily means honest representation. Then, I asked if the altered image in Question 3 was an honest representation.

> Well, I guess it's honest and not honest because if you gotta make a distinction, you gotta make as distinction somewhere. I mean. ... You know, I am not gonna say it's wrong 'cause wrong is

> such a strong word, but there is some level of dishonesty there, or some level of truth's been compromised. Because the photographer made the woman more important there.

Ms. S suggested that a new technology should not always be used just because it is available. "You use it when it's appropriate," she said. "And it's appropriate in art, it's not appropriate in reporting."

Ms. S had no problem with having a traditional news photograph serve as a piece of evidence in a courtroom so long as it is made sure that it has not been manipulated. She noticed that traditional photographs have been used and are still being used as courtroom evidence. When talking about digital imaging, she resolutely negated such possibility.

> Huang: So how about digital images?
> Ms. S: No. Because they lend themselves too much to being manipulated. ... You don't know if they are showing what's true, how can you use them?
> Huang: Digital images are not necessarily altered though they are digitally processed.
> Ms. S: OK, what's the difference?
> Huang: For instance, I take a picture of you with a digital camera. It's you, sitting in front of me. I put the image into a computer and print it out. It's not altered at all. It's processed.
> Ms. S: Well, how do we know it's not altered?
> Huang: I told you.
> Ms. S: Who are *you*? (Smile)
> Huang: Who are you? (Smile)
> Ms. S: Doesn't that make sense? If they lend themselves to manipulation and it is possible to manipulate them easily without being any sort of record of it, I don't see how you can use it in a court or use it for newspapers or magazines.

This conversation shows us that the trust in a photograph is becoming a matter of trust in human being when a digital image is being used as evidence. This shift of trust brought up by digital imaging seems to be bringing more crisis than consolidation of confidence in photography as a truth conveyer.

Ms. S's biggest concern over digital imaging was the potential to mislead. She believed that digital imaging posed a great threat to the link that people make between veracity and photograph or veracity and the idea of documentation. She said that "the problem is it seems just like free for all and people can do whatever they want and not be responsible for what they have done." To Ms. S, digital images should not be used at all in any documentary contexts. "Documentation suggests truth. Documentation is equated with truth." So, if an altered image is used, she believed it important to inform the viewer that a level of veracity was compromised.

## Conclusion

Because of the small sample frame as well as the low response rate, I do not mean to extend the conclusion of this study to the general population of this country. What I expect is that this study could provide the academic and professional worlds a chance to peep into some print news media readers' thinking about digital imaging alterations. Any observations and general conclusions stated here should be understood as being referred to my sample frame.

After decades of exposure to postmodern phenomena such as Disneyland, "Star Wars," and more recently, re-enacted cop shows, professional wrestling, the World Wide Web, and cloning technologies, most readers seem psychologically prepared to accept postmodern concepts embedded in these postmodern phenomena such as fictional truth or documentary fiction, retroactive repositioning, spaceless space, and so on. Digital imaging technology has not come as a surprise to them. Many readers have taken the use of it in print news media for granted, thus, showing understanding and acceptance of potential digital imaging alterations.

However, readers' acceptance of alterations is limited. They tend to give more freedom to editors to do alterations in photographic illustrations and feature photos but tend to be very hard on any alterations in hard news photos. They regard photographic illustrations as pure art, feature photos as semi-art and semi-news and hard news photos as truth. It is interesting to note that readers and editors share the same pattern of alteration acceptance among these three types of photos by comparing this study to Reaves' 1995 study. In spite of the fact that readers are generally more tolerant toward digital imaging alterations than editors, we should not forget that readers' general attitude is: try your best not to alter images. Readers care, and care greatly, about potential alterations being involved when reality rather than imagination becomes the reference in an image used in a documentary context. Therefore, the guidelines and principles for using altering images they propose to the print news media include:

1. Whenever possible, do no alterations.
2. If using any altered images, identify the alterations.
3. Try not to alter hard news photos; try not to alter human beings; and try not to alter the meaning of a photograph.
4. Do unto others as you would have them do to you.
5. Better raise the standard to being ethical rather than being legal.

Because of the different designs of the questionnaire, I felt it often was hard to make comparisons between the findings in Reaves' 1993 study of editors and the findings in my study. The good news is that it seems obvious that the acceptance rates in Reaves' study for almost all the comparable alterations were much lower than the general acceptance rates in my study. Most of the time, they are even lower than, or, at least, close to, the acceptance rates for hard news photos in my study. That means, editors in Reaves' study held stricter standards of altering images than readers. Since editors are the gatekeepers of the images fed to readers, it is imaginable that troubles will befall them if their standards of using digitally altered images are lower than those of readers'. Fortunately, that did not seem to be the case.

Compared to Reaves' findings in her 1993 study, the findings in this study about the association between readers' backgrounds and their ways of accepting digital imaging alterations take on a different significance. For editors, knowing and understanding the use of digital images poses no problem since they use digital images or see them used every day. Therefore, they should all be able to give informed answers to Reaves' questions based on their education, age, professional experience, and so on. Now, when readers are exposed to similar questions, as it was found in my study, whether their answers are informed or make, at least, statistical sense, to a large degree, depends on their prior knowledge of digital imaging and their awareness of the uses of digital images in media rather than on their education or age. It is not difficult to find that the readers tend to be more tolerarnt toward digital imaging alterations when they know more about digital imaging.

However, awareness of digital imaging use in media seems to be a problem to a considerable proportion of readers. 40% of the readers in my study were not aware that easily alterable digital images are being used in print news media after the print news media have adopted the digital imaging technology for around two decades. That was one of the reasons why almost 100% of the readers expected the media to let them know if a digitally altered image is used. What is ironic is that the media do not seem to have done a good job in explaining to the public what digital images are.

No readers accepted digital imaging alterations, a product or by-product of digital imaging technology, without struggle, that is, unconditionally, just as the general public can accept the cloning of a sheep but not the cloning of human being, at least, not yet. Traditional ethical values, ways of thinking and habits of news reading are playing a big part in their acceptance of this new technology. They generally welcome the new technology because of its efficiency in processing photographic images, but do not expect it to be used to misrepresent or even defame a person and further mislead readers. A reader made a fair comment: "I think it is a useful technology. Unfortunately, it is often misused."

Although the concept of truth associated with documentary photography has been deconstructed by postmodernists such as Jacques Derrida and postmodern artists such as Richard Prince, Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine for more than two decades, readers still believe in the concept of truth. They believe that truth should be presented objectively although they understand that truth is subjective and personal and reaching any truth is difficult. Postmodernism, as an ivory-tower concept, does not seem to have exerted a great influence on ordinary media readers' thoughts about truth. Readers like Ms. S may not really be aware that facts are not known or given, but that rather, they are selected and constructed by reporters, they, nevertheless, requested that reporters report news with honesty, accuracy and fairness. And these concepts mainly comprise their understanding of what truth means. Readers have generally equated news reporting to truth conveying and expect that this is still the case in the postmodern age. Therefore, digital imaging alterations, especially those done with potential ulterior motives, that could cause salient change of the meaning of a photograph such as the darkened O.J. Simpson mug shot, and the Oprah Winfrey composite image, have encountered great objection.

It is clear that readers do make distinctions between publications when they read photographs and they would like to read those publications that they believe better reveal truth to them. In other words, what readers choose to read relies heavily on their trust in that news provider. Readers tend to trust news photographs and reporting in serious newspapers such as the *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and their local newspaper, more than serious news magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Time*, and much more than other types of news media such as infotainment magazines and tabloids. As a result, serious newspapers have attracted most readers, followed by serious news magazines, infotainment and documentary magazines which both are regarded as entertainment or leisure reading materials, and tabloids. What readers perceive is conditioned by what they expect to perceive. It is important for news media to meet readers' truth expectation, and not to destroy hard-earned credibility. In many instances, credibility may already be in danger by the many cases of digital imaging alterations together with other types of manipulations.

It is interesting to note the tension between readers' concerns and their high acceptance rates for many types of alterations. Readers are upset that the mastery of the "real" is largely lost in this new technology. They seriously doubt or simply no longer believe that digital images any longer possess the evidential function that traditional photographs possess. They understand that digital imaging works as a much less reliable truth conveyor although the reliability of traditional photographs in conveying truth has been under attack for many decades. On the other hand, seeing no alternatives, many readers feel that they have to make a compromise to technological development. As a result, many gray-area alterations have got at least a 50% acceptance rate. For instance, 67% of the readers agreed that it was OK for the editor to do digital dental work to the mother of the sextuplets in a feature photo or as a photographic illustration because they loved her and did not want her to be presented with the ugly jaggy teeth. This grey area extends more easily into those alterations that do not much affect the content such as abridging a strip of empty space, removing a randomly included car, reverse cropping and changing the depth of field. Digital imaging technology reflects the clash between the readers's wish to hold on to the traditional values and their involuntary acceptance of digital imaging alterations. It is predictable that the day is not far away when the public's trust in photographs at large will sink into a crisis and photographs will no longer be able to serve as evidence.

Public opinion can provide us food for thought. Going digital does not necessarily mean being distrusted, but this does seem to be a big problem facing the media. As an irreversible historical trend, digital imaging technology is becoming the backbone of news photo processing. Technology develops, but newspaper and news magazine's primary goal of distributing fresh *and* truthful news and feature stories to readers remains the same. This study tells us, digital imaging alterations could get a high acceptance rate among readers, but risks eventually losing readers. Promoting responsible use of digital imaging technology in newsrooms, to a great extent, determines whether the profession of photojournalism will maintain the public trust.

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